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**The Writings  
of  
Thomas Pringle**

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*The Writings of Thomas Pringle*

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Thomas Pringle (1789-1834) is remembered as a poet, journalist, travel writer, editor, political campaigner and anti-slavery activist, yet a thorough critical survey of his writings, including his poetry, journalism, letters, narratives and anti-slavery propaganda, is lacking in Pringle scholarship. This dissertation undertakes the task of a critical survey, in order to bring the diverse range of his writings to the attention of a wider audience, and to lay the foundations for future critical interpretation of Pringle's work. Work published by Pringle during his lifetime appears between 1811 and 1834, originally in Scotland, and later in South Africa and England as well. Pringle's output is diverse, both in style, content and genre. Previous critical discussion of his writing has usually been limited to isolated aspects of his oeuvre - in particular, his 'South African' poetry - and does not take the entirety into account. In this dissertation, I seek to correct this imbalance by exploring the range of Pringle's writings and establishing a general, chronological framework within which these various writings can be interpreted. I have found it necessary to adopt a chronological approach in order to underline the crucial links between Pringle's work and his life, as well as the influence of his developing political thought upon the style and content of his writing.



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## Preface

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration. This dissertation does not exceed the regulation length, including footnotes, references and appendices but excluding the bibliography. The dissertation conforms to the parameters laid out in the Modern Humanities Research Association's *Style Book*.



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## Key

*Albany - Some Account of the Present State of English Settlers in Albany, South Africa*

*Autumnal Excursion - The Autumnal Excursion; or, Sketches in Teviotdale; with Other Poems*

*Ephemerides - Ephemerides; or, Occasional Poems, written in Scotland and South Africa*

*Institute - The Institute: A Heroic Poem in Four Cantos*

*Mary Prince - The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave*

*Narrative - Narrative of a Residence in South Africa*

*Poems - Poems Illustrative of South Africa*

*QBSAL - Quarterly Bulletin of the South African Library*

*SACA - South African Commercial Advertiser*

*SAJ - South African Journal*

FB - Pringle-Fairbairn correspondence, Library of Parliament, Cape Town

NLS - National Library of Scotland

When quoting from manuscript and primary sources, I have maintained the original orthography and spelling, including italics, double underscoring, insertions, etc..

In order to represent the historical particularity of Pringle's writings as accurately as possible, I have used terms such as 'Bushman', 'Boor', 'Hottentot', 'Caffer', etc. in their conventional nineteenth century colonial/imperial senses, following Pringle's own usage of the terms.

*No! the brown Serpent of the Rocks  
His den doth yet retain;  
And none who there his sting provokes,  
Shall find its poison vain!*  
(Pringle: 'Bushman Song', 1825)

*But if I can extract, as I trust by the aid and strength of truth to be able to  
do, Pringle's sting, and Pringle's venom, out of Mary's tale, all her other  
accusations must of necessity drop off harmless and despicable.*  
(James MacQueen, Editor of the *Glasgow Herald*, 1831)

## 1: Introduction

Today, the once-colonial literatures of Australia, Africa, India and the Americas claim independence and autonomy from their metropolitan pasts because they have forged, and still are forging, new and unique identities for themselves. At the same time, the importance of early colonial writing in the British Imperial nexus has increasingly been recognised. Thomas Pringle, a seminal figure in this nexus with regard to early British colonisation of the Cape, has, however, largely been ignored by European participants in the post-colonial debate. Before the task of locating Pringle's work in this context can be undertaken, however, it is crucial that both the range and internal development of his own writings are investigated. A thorough critical survey of Pringle's writings, including his poetry, journalism, letters, narratives and anti-slavery propaganda, is lacking in Pringle scholarship. This dissertation undertakes the task of a critical survey, in order to bring the diverse range of his writings to the attention of a wider audience, and to lay the foundations for future critical interpretation of Pringle's work.

Work published by Pringle during his lifetime appears between 1811 and 1834, originally in Scotland, and later in South Africa and England as well. Pringle's output is diverse, both in style, content and genre. Previous critical discussion of it has usually been limited to isolated aspects of his oeuvre - in particular, his 'South African' poetry - and does not take the entirety into account. In this dissertation, I seek to correct this imbalance by exploring the range of Pringle's writings and establishing a general, chronological framework within which these various writings can be interpreted. I have found it necessary to adopt a chronological approach in order to underline the crucial links between Pringle's work and his life, as well as the influence of his developing



political thought upon the style and content of his writing. Original manuscripts and publications will be used as sources of reference whenever they are available.

This chapter contains a discussion of secondary critical literature on Pringle, which will highlight how the majority of these studies have failed to locate Pringle's writings within the context of the British Imperial nexus, and how they have been hampered by a limited knowledge of the scope and chronological development of his work.

The critical survey commences in Chapter Two with a discussion of Pringle's thematic preoccupations in the poetry and journalism which he published in Scotland between 1811 and 1820. His apolitical stance as a journal editor is also considered.

Chapter Three investigates Pringle's response, in poetry, prose, and as editor of the *South African Commercial Advertiser (SACA)* and *South African Journal (SAJ)*, to the Cape colonial environment between 1820 and 1824. After a discussion of the 1820 scheme for settling the Cape, the chapter traces the gradual emergence of (often ambivalent) anti-colonial government and pro-settler sentiments in his work during this period. Chapter Four will demonstrate how the events of 1824-1826, from the closure of the *SACA* and *SAJ* to Pringle's ill-fated Bushman commando, caused him to intensify his rhetoric against the colonial government, broaden the scope of his writings, and eventually attempt to redefine the nature of his political project, as evidenced in his correspondence, poetry and prose. This will be shown to have important implications when analysing his work produced both before and after this period.

Pringle returned to London in 1826. Chapter Five traces the growing political and rhetorical convergence between his poetic and prose writings. It also discusses the impact this had on Pringle's editorship of *Thompson's Travels*, and his editorial policies with regard to the *Oriental Herald* and the annual *Friendship's Offering*. Pringle's anti-slavery stance, as well as his role as secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society from 1827-

1834, had a particular influence on his writings. Chapter Six concentrates on his specifically anti-slavery writings (all of which were produced after 1825) in order to situate them in the broader context of his oeuvre. Chapter Seven discusses Pringle's final publication, *African Sketches*. In terms of his development as a writer, it considers the importance of the specific links between his African poetry and African narrative which Pringle himself emphasised in this publication.

Pringle's oeuvre is far too large for a consideration of every individual piece he wrote in this short space, but the bibliography will fill these lacunae and be a useful resource for future researchers.<sup>1</sup> Appendix One contains a short, strictly non-critical biography of Pringle. The biographical sketch is designed merely to orientate readers who may not be familiar with Pringle's life history. Appendix Two contains a small selection of poems by Pringle, mostly from manuscript sources.

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1 Patricia Morris, in *A Documentary Account of the Life of Thomas Pringle* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of London, 1982), states that 'a complete bibliography of Pringle's published and unpublished work would in itself constitute a major project' (p. 18). My bibliography will be as complete as possible, but cannot claim to be exhaustive. Morris adds that 'a comprehensive study of his poetry, and extensive research on the large number of articles he produced, has yet to be methodically conducted' (p. 24). This dissertation will, in part, fill that gap.



### 1.1: Secondary criticism of Pringle

As mentioned above, this survey of Pringle's critics is included chiefly to demonstrate that the questions most often asked about Pringle, especially before the more recent work of Calder, Voss, Kloppe and Bunn, have been limited by a restricted knowledge of the range and development of his writings, and often fail to locate them in the context of the British Imperial nexus.<sup>2</sup> Critics of Pringle's writings have tended to focus on particular, isolated aspects of his work. The only two scholarly works of more than article length on Pringle's writing are the unpublished theses of André Brink and Sidney Clouts. Brink's MA thesis, *Three South African English Poets*, devotes sixty three pages to some of Pringle's 'Scottish' and 'South African' poetry from a New Critical perspective.<sup>3</sup> Sydney Clout's MA thesis, *The Violent Arcadia*, tracks Pringle's presentation of a 'violent arcadia' in his African poetry, making a few references to his *Narrative*.<sup>4</sup> The bulk of the thesis, however, is devoted to a study of the same theme in the work of Francis Carey Slater and Roy Campbell. Most of Pringle's other critics, including Eskia Mpahlele, J. M. Coetzee, Dirk Kloppe, A. E. Voss, David Bunn and Pereira and Chapman have concentrated on aspects of his 'South African' poetry.<sup>5</sup>

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2 Pringle's major biographers to date, John Robert Doyle, Jane Meiring and Patricia Morris, have provided fascinating accounts of his life, though of varying quality. Doyle and Meiring's books contain some inaccuracies and concentrate on Pringle's South African connection. Morris's excellently thorough and scholarly work, however, may be called the definitive biography. Morris (1982) says in her abstract that 'no attempt is made to evaluate his writings in literary-critical terms.' Shorter biographical sketches have also been composed by Josiah Conder, James Leishman, Leitch Ritchie, and William Hay. See the bibliography for full details.

3 André P. Brink, *Three South African English Poets: A Critical Study* (unpublished master's thesis, Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, 1958).

4 Sydney Clouts, *The Violent Arcadia: An Examination of the Response to Nature in the Poetry of Thomas Pringle, Francis Carey Slater and Roy Campbell* (unpublished master's thesis, Rhodes University, 1971).

5 By 'South African' writings, I mean those writings by Pringle which speak of or describe 'South Africa', a distinction Pringle made himself in *Ephemerides* (1828) and *African Sketches* (1834). Fully detailed references to the critics above can be found in the bibliography.

Although writers on the subject or person of Thomas Pringle vary widely in terms of their intentions and insights, it is possible to isolate five areas of debate which arise frequently in Pringle criticism. In simplified form, the questions which have often occupied critics are as follows: Is Pringle to be regarded as a Scot or a South African? To what extent can one call Pringle the 'Father of South African poetry'? Was, or is, Pringle's approach to writing 'appropriate' in a South African context? Is Pringle's work a success or a failure? Finally, is he to be viewed chiefly as a poet, writer, journalist or political activist?

### **1.1.1: Pringle and national identity**

The first of these questions, in particular, ignores Pringle's position in the British Imperial nexus. The answer to the question of national identity, for those who have been concerned with it, is not a simple issue of nationality - Pringle died a British citizen. It is a cultural question, made pertinent because Pringle's intentions relating to emigration came into conflict with the political realities of his life. Pringle died in his 46th year. He spent only six of these in the Cape Colony, from 30 April 1820 to 16 April 1826, but not by choice, for it was his intention to settle in South Africa permanently. Two things are clear. Firstly, Pringle aimed to spend his life in South Africa, but was prevented from doing so by, he claims, the 'Reign of Terror' of Lord Charles Somerset.<sup>6</sup> Secondly, and perhaps because of his short residence there, Pringle 'always regarded himself as a Scottish Poet'.<sup>7</sup> Angus Calder demonstrates this in an informative essay

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<sup>6</sup> *Narrative*, p. 175.

<sup>7</sup> Ernest Pereira and Michael Chapman, eds., 'Introduction' to *African Poems of Thomas Pringle* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1989), p. x.

which aims to 'reclaim [Pringle] for Scotland.'<sup>8</sup> Calder states that 'Pringle certainly regarded himself, to his dying day, as a Scottish writer. To Fairbairn, in 1832, he expressed the hope that he would rank as a 'minor' Scottish poet alongside the likes of Logan and Leyden.'<sup>9</sup>

The argument concerning national identity has ignored the fact that Pringle was a product of British Imperial culture. It has also had ramifications on the way people have viewed his corpse, as well as his corpus of writing. Pringle's remains were originally interred in Bunhill Fields, London, alongside Bunyan, Blake and Defoe, but were re-buried in the Cape in December 1970. This is a tangible demonstration of the feeling that Pringle somehow 'belongs' to South Africa, more than he does to England or Scotland. The amount of research and critical writing conducted in South Africa far outweighs that done in Scotland or England. In this way, Pringle has been appropriated for South African literature by scholars and readers of poetry who continue to pay attention to him. Angus Calder makes his polemical point of reclaiming Pringle for Scotland, in my view, because so many South African critics have ignored his origins and work outside of South Africa. Recent work by Klopper, Voss and Bunn has seen Pringle, as does Calder, both a Scotsman and a colonist.

South African critics who have concentrated either on Pringle's 'Africanness' or his 'Britishness' as a means of appropriating him for, or distancing him from, South African literature, have run the risk of oversimplifying their approach to his writing. For instance, André Brink in his 1958 thesis, *Three South African English Poets, A Critical Study*, is the only South African critic to have given detailed attention to Pringle's

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8 Angus Calder, 'Thomas Pringle (1789-1834): A Scottish Poet in South Africa', in *The History and Historiography of Commonwealth Literature*, ed. by Dieter Riemenschneider (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 1983), 198-210 (p. 198). Also in *English in Africa* (May 1982), 1-14.

9 Calder, p. 203.

Scottish poetry, but he does so in order to question the quality of Pringle's South African verse:

It should now be clear that Pringle, being the first true poet of this country, holds a place of historical importance, which is slightly marred by the fact that his South African poetry, constituting less than half of his *œuvre*, is not genuinely indigenous, but influenced and affected by the poet's Scottish background. Pringle remains a bystander, a spectator, witnessing South African conditions from the outside without that essential knowledge of them which can only be attained through long experience. And because he often could not sense correctly that which he portrayed in verse, his portrayal itself is defective.<sup>10</sup>

Brink's use of the word 'correctly' in 1958 suggests a belief that only a certain type of South African is 'authentic' and capable of writing South African verse which is not 'defective'. Crucially, Brink remains silent about the exact nature of the creature he prescribes. Because Brink questions Pringle's 'Africanness', he concentrates in his thesis on Pringle's Scottish poetry and devotes most of his study to tracing the British poetic influences on Pringle's poems. Consequently, he ignores most of Pringle's South African work. When he does pay attention to it, he looks at its form more than its content. His underlying argument is that if the form of the poetry is not 'South African', because Pringle was not 'South African', then the content becomes of 'historical importance,' rather than having poetic merit.

Earlier than Brink, in 1934, the poet Roy Campbell discounted Pringle as a valuable model for South African poets, on the grounds that he was insufficiently 'South African'. Campbell says: 'Pringle [...] was not a Colonial'.<sup>11</sup> He was of 'the drifting population that has no roots in our country'.<sup>12</sup> Not surprisingly, Campbell, of colonial stock, admits colonials as 'South Africans', the requirement being permanent residence.

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<sup>10</sup> Brink, p. 61.

<sup>11</sup> Roy Campbell, *Broken Record* (London: Boriswood, 1934), p. 126.

<sup>12</sup> Campbell, p. 58.

He uses this assumption to dismiss Pringle. On the other hand, Lourens Van der Post, an Afrikaans South African, views Pringle's work in a positive light, probably because he deems Pringle to have been 'Africanised' to a great extent.<sup>13</sup> He pictures Pringle in these glowing terms:

But in the six years that he spent in Africa Pringle took the nature and the problems of the country deeply upon himself: he took the blow as it were not over the head but in the solar plexus of his sensitive, imaginative and courageous nature, and as a result left us a record in prose and verse of his single-handed encounter with South Africa.<sup>14</sup>

The attitudes of commentators with regard to Pringle's 'Scottishness' or 'Africanness' have influenced their perception of Pringle's work, and their selective approach to it. No research comparing Pringle with other colonial British poets of the time, such as John Leyden in India, for instance, has been conducted thus far. Rather than attempting to force Pringle onto, or distance him from, a particularly South African mould, it is clear that he was a Scot who was committed to South Africa, then forced to leave it. He left the country with an ambivalent relationship to the colonial/imperial project. He was undoubtedly influenced by South Africa, and influenced areas of life in South Africa; but this does not explain or describe his entire life and work. Pringle was a man who had a unique experience of different worlds; it is the combination and tension between them that can provide a key to reinterpretation of his work.

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13 Compare D. J. Opperman's comments in 'Roy Campbell en die Suid-Afrikaanse Poësie', *Standpunte*, 7 (1954), p. 5: 'Sy verse is helder van klank en siening, het 'n soepele driftigheid. [...] Ons kry in sy poësie 'n treffende voorbeeld van hoe die digter hom losmaak van sy vorige vaderland (Skotland) en hom aanpas aan die nuwe land.'

'His verse is clear in sound and vision; it has a subtle passion. [...] We find in his poetry a striking example of how an artist disengages himself from his previous fatherland (Scotland) and adapts himself to the new country.' [my translation]

14 Lourens Van der Post, Introduction to William Plomer's, *Turbott Wolfe* (1925; Oxford: OUP, 1985), pp. 28-29.

### 1.1.2: Pringle as the 'Father of South African poetry'

Pringle's early South African poem 'Afar in the Desert', alone, appeared 'in about a million copies in the hundred years after its debut in 1824.'<sup>15</sup> The early popularity of Pringle's African writing in Britain began a process whereby Pringle became gradually associated with South Africa.<sup>16</sup> For Pringle's contemporary, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, it does not appear to be relevant whether Pringle is a Scot or South African. Coleridge's note to Pringle in 1828 concerning 'Afar in the Desert' states that 'with the omission of about four or at the utmost six lines I do not hesitate to declare it, among the two or three most perfect lyric Poems in our Language.'<sup>17</sup> Pringle is simply a fellow romantic poet, using 'our Language', whose verses may be improved, aesthetically, after some helpful advice. There is no evidence to suggest that Coleridge viewed Pringle as a colonial when they later became friends and neighbours in London. Pringle certainly acted on Coleridge's advice, omitting some lines, mostly to the detriment of the poem if one accepts that Pringle's original comments are more interesting to the South African English romantic verse tradition than Coleridge's poetic concerns.<sup>18</sup> Geoffrey Haresnape accuses Pringle of being willing to 'pick up the few crumbs that fell from the metropolitan table,' and says that this attitude shows signs of 'cultural cringe'.<sup>19</sup> Pringle, however, did not consider himself to be a South African poet, was living in the

<sup>15</sup> Calder, p. 201.

<sup>16</sup> As early as 1834, *The Court Magazine* easily identifies Pringle as an 'African Poet', though this may simply mean that he writes about Africa: 'We may next mention the African Glen, at the Colosseum, in Regent's Park. This attractive novelty, aided by a magnificent panoramic painting, transports us at once into the wilds of Africa, with its hills and valleys, its rivers and its animals. Here, in the heart of London, we have the reality of the scenes so vividly painted by the African poet, Thomas Pringle.' *The Court Magazine*, 5 (July-December, 1834), p. 44.

<sup>17</sup> Earl Leslie Griggs, ed., *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, 6 vols (Oxford: OUP, 1971), p. 732.

<sup>18</sup> See my discussion of the omitted lines in Chapter Three. See also Geoffrey Haresnape's comments in Haresnape, G., 'Enlightenment and Emancipation? Thomas Pringle and Samuel Taylor Coleridge' (unpublished paper, University of Cape Town, 1990), pp. 6-7.

<sup>19</sup> Haresnape, p. 7 and p. 8. This simply misunderstands the nature of British Imperial culture in the early nineteenth century.



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<sup>19</sup> Haresnape, p. 7 and p. 8. This simply misunderstands the nature of British Imperial culture in the early nineteenth century.

metropolis (London) at the time, and was merely taking a renowned fellow poet's advice, just as Wordsworth took Coleridge's aesthetic advice, at times infelicitously.<sup>20</sup>

In 1849, fifteen years after Pringle's death, the Scot Thomas Baines visited the Pringle settlement to stay with Robert Pringle who was, as he says, 'a near relative of the Scottish emigrant whose poetry, long ere I left my native country, had rendered the names of the valleys and streams of Africa "familiar in my mouth as household words".'<sup>21</sup> And later, 'many of the spots hallowed by the poetry of the British emigrants' earliest and sweetest bard were pointed out to me.'<sup>22</sup> Here, Pringle is already viewed, from the outside, as an emigrant poet, if not yet a South African poet. By 1880, we have the American poet Longfellow who remembers South Africa as 'the [country] associated with "that splendid and incomparable lyric of Pringle's"'<sup>23</sup> which he said he could never forget.'<sup>24</sup>

Rudyard Kipling, more than seven decades after Pringle's death, viewed Pringle's verse as being definitively South African. Thus, he could say that 'as to South African Verse, it's a case of there's Pringle, and there's Pringle, and after that one must hunt the local newspapers.'<sup>25</sup> This was not far off the mark at the time in the sense that very little Dutch poetry was ever published in the country, and Afrikaans poetry only began to be published in earnest in the late <sup>nineteenth</sup> century. White domination of print media ensured that poetry by black writers, either in English or other languages, gained prominence as

20 In particular, Wordsworth made some changes to his own poetry following Coleridge's criticism in *Biographia Literaria* (1817; Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983), no. 7, vol. 2, chapters 18-22.

21 Thomas Baines, *Journal of a Residence in Africa 1842-1853*, ed. by R. F. Kennedy, 2 vols (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1961), 1, p. 113.

22 Baines, p. 115.

23 'Afar in the Desert'. I have spotted an echo of this poem in Whitman's 'Song of Myself'. Whitman writes: 'Coming home with the silent and dark-cheek'd bush-boy, / (behind me he rides at the drape of the day).' In Walt Whitman, *The Complete Poems*, ed. by Francis Murphey (London: Penguin Books, 1986), p. 99, lines 784-785. This resembles Pringle's 'Afar in the Desert I like to ride / With the silent bushboy alone by my side.'

24 In George Armstrong, 'Thomas Pringle', a lecture, delivered in 1887 (University of Natal Library, 1964).

25 In G. Sampson, revised by R. C. Churchill, *Concise Cambridge History of English Literature* (Cambridge: CUP, 1970), pp. 761-762.



published material as late<sup>as</sup> the 1950's. There can be no doubt that Pringle was the first person writing in and about South Africa to enjoy any considerable reputation as a poet in the United Kingdom, until, perhaps, Roy Campbell, in the 1930's, and to a much lesser degree, Francis Carey Slater who was born in 1876. But stating that Pringle is the first 'South African' poet of any stature, is not to claim paternity.

The title 'Father of South African poetry' was given to Pringle in 1887 by Alexander Wilmot,<sup>26</sup> 'as if this was already a well known phrase.'<sup>27</sup> It has become a catch phrase for those critics who view Pringle as a South African, especially those who wish to use its rhetorical nuance of colonial paternalism. Jacques Alvarez-Pereyre, summing up the general attitude to Pringle in 1979, says that though he lived in South Africa for only six years, '[h]e is nevertheless regarded not only as a South African but also as the father of South African poetry in English.'<sup>28</sup> David Bunn provides a contemporary political analysis of this phenomenon:

Because of his important role as one of South Africa's first journalists and his support for print culture, free speech, the abolition of slavery, and reform, Pringle is the narrative beginning both for the myth of origins that enables liberal ideology to dissociate its own history from that of the monster apartheid and for a patriarchal and racist version of South African literary history that often portrays him as the 'father of South African Poetry'.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> A. Wilmot, ed., *The Poetry of South Africa* (London: Sampson Low; Cape Town: Juta, 1887), p. vii.

<sup>27</sup> Calder, p. 201.

<sup>28</sup> Jacques Alvarez-Pereyre, *The Poetry of Commitment in South Africa*, trans. by Clive Wake (London: Heineman, 1984), p. 52.

<sup>29</sup> David Bunn, "'Our Wattled Cot': Mercantile and Domestic Space in Thomas Pringle's African Landscapes,' in *Landscape and Power*, ed. by W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1994), pp. 127-173 (p. 136). Bunn notes that 'inexplicably, contemporary literary histories continue to perpetuate this myth. Among a host of examples, one typical misrepresentation is contained in David Adey, Ridley Beeton, et al., eds., *Companion to South African Literature* (Johannesburg, 1986), 162.' (p. 170).

As Bunn rightly points out, the debate about Pringle's paternity is highly politically charged. Consequently, answers to the question of Pringle's paternity in the South African English poetical tradition have tended to depend on the critic's own partisan preoccupations. Critics who assume Pringle's paternity also assume that 'South African verse' is synonymous with 'English verse in the romantic tradition.' Apart from the cultural elitism inherent in this view, these critics treat South African literature as a mere addendum to English literature. The poetic tradition of which Pringle is called the father, however, is no longer alive in South African poetry, at least since the 1960's. As Stephen Watson says of Sydney Clouts, the 'tradition of literary romanticism in South Africa, in existence since the earlier part of the nineteenth century, finds one of its final expressions [in the 1960's poetry of Sydney Clouts] before it starts disintegrating under the pressure of forces which neither the tradition nor Clouts himself, it seems, were able to assimilate.'<sup>30</sup>

In terms of contemporary South African poetry, the issue of paternity is relevant to critics like Stephen Gray, who wish to define South African literature as having a unique identity:

If one considers Southern African English Literature to be an addendum to English Literature, one has to nominate Pringle as the founding father, but if one chooses to view Southern African English Literature as a part of a multilingual African literature, one has to hold up Andrew Geddes Bain as a more appropriate transitional figure.<sup>31</sup>

Gray favours the view that Bain's 'Kaatje Kekkelbek' is closer to being a part of 'African Literature' because it uses local dialects not found in euro-centric or European

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<sup>30</sup> Stephen Watson, 'Sydney Clouts & the Limits of Romanticism', in *Selected Essays, 1980-1990* (Cape Town: Carrefour Press, 1990), 57-81 (p. 57).

<sup>31</sup> Stephen Gray, *Southern African Literature: An Introduction* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1979), p. 87.

literature of the time.<sup>32</sup> The contemporary question of the identity of South African literature, however, is not my immediate concern. Insofar as South Africa's history has been influenced and partly constituted by Euro-colonialism and its contentions, Pringle is surely a seminal figure. Several critics assert, with justification, the relevance of Pringle's South African poetry.<sup>33</sup> Pringle was the first colonist in one hundred and sixty eight years of South African colonial history who saw fit, as a major project, to construct the country and its troubles in poetic form at all. For instance, according to Gray, 'one recollects the courage of the artistic statement Pringle was making in rendering Xhosa songs into English ('Makanna's Gathering' and 'The Brown Hunter's Song' are examples): such material, he was demonstrating in somewhat idealised tones, could also be the right and proper concerns of everyone's literature.'<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, the themes of oppression, violence, exile and land-ownership which suffuse Pringle's South African poems continue to dominate much of South African poetry to this day.<sup>35</sup>

### **1.1.3: The appropriateness of Pringle's writing in a South African context.**

The romantic tradition in South African verse is obviously no longer an appropriate vehicle for poetry in contemporary South Africa.<sup>36</sup> South African critics, however, have continued to investigate the 'appropriateness' of Pringle's language, either to distance South African literature from European traditions, or to identify it with those traditions.

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32 See Gray, p. 57.

33 Pereira and Chapman provide an interesting list of these reasons: 'The problems [Pringle] wrestled with - racial conflict, political oppression and censorship, economic exploitation - are equally relevant today. The same can be said of the questions his work raises concerning literature as propaganda (or 'protest'), distinctions between 'literature' and other forms of writing, such as social documentation, and what is meant by 'South African' literature', p. xii.

34 Gray, p. 165.

35 Sydney Clouts notes that only five of Pringle's African poems do not contain violence of one sort or another. Clouts, p. 24.

36 See Watson (1990), pp. 57-81.

Both of these attempts ignore the place Pringle's writing has in the broader imperial and colonial context. Kloppe has demonstrated adequately how critics have used notions of 'appropriateness' for their own ends, especially with regard to Pringle.<sup>37</sup> Quite rightly, he says 'we should accept, instead, that this poetry does not pretend to be anything other than colonial, and explore the implications of this premise.'<sup>38</sup> Critics have rarely asked what 'appropriateness' meant for Pringle, if anything. In other words, even if they recall that he was a British poet who applied, to a large extent, the traditions he had inherited in order to write about South Africa, they fail to ask to what extent he adapted his inherited models,<sup>39</sup> or how he used them to portray the 'human and moral dimensions' of the conflicts he found in an alien and 'divided landscape'.<sup>40</sup> By way of example, Coetzee's comment that the 'underlying argument' of a poem like 'Evening Rambles'

is that, since the African wilderness clearly does not strain the capacities of the English language or even of English verse, it can be contained within the European category of the exotic,<sup>41</sup>

is certainly valid with regard to Pringle's unquestioning usage of poetic form and metre, iambic-tetrameter couplets in this case, <sup>but</sup> to concentrate solely on this aspect of the poetry is to lose sight of the areas of struggle contained in it, or of its complexity.<sup>42</sup>

Pringle is often blamed for being unable to break away from European poetic forms, though he has his supporters. As E. R. Seary wrote in response to an attack on Pringle by Partridge: 'Pringle comes to South Africa and is one of the first to see the substance

37 'Ideology and the study of South African English poetry,' *JLS*, 3 (1987), 67-93 (pp. 77-78).

38 Kloppe (1987), p. 78.

39 I do not agree with the categorical nature of Clout's assertion that Pringle 'always remained a British poet and did not depart from the tradition he had inherited,' Clouts, p. 43.

40 Pereira and Chapman, p. xxvi.

41 J. M. Coetzee, *White Writing* (Harvard: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 164.

42 For a detailed analysis of this poem, see Bunn. Bunn's reading reveals the complexity of this poem, which suggests that exoticism is not as easily represented in European categories as Coetzee's statement implies.

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of poetry in the strange people and scenes of this 'remote' colony [...] and now Mr. Partridge complains because Pringle was not Wordsworth and because later writers imitated the kind of verse he wrote.'<sup>43</sup> Pringle himself neither claimed to be a 'Wordsworth' nor to be the originator of a unique school of South African poetry. His South African work is interesting chiefly because it struggles to express the dilemmas and pressures of an oppressed and divided country in a form developed in a different hemisphere. Pringle, as a romantic poet, had to struggle to explore the realities of a 'landscape only imagined or seen in dreams by other poets of the Romantic age.'<sup>44</sup>

Commentators who question the 'appropriateness' of Pringle's language often do so as a means for belittling it. For instance, Coetzee says of Guy Butler that 'in play[ing] out themes from the English tradition against an African backdrop Butler settles for no less provincial a goal than the Thomas Pringle of *Poems Illustrative of South Africa*.'<sup>45</sup> This statement ignores the fact that many of these poems were written in London, and that they constantly treat the issues of oppression, land rights, war, exile and slavery, which were critical areas of contestation throughout the British Empire and within Britain itself at the time. They were problems both of imperial and colonial ideologies. Pringle's poems, in the book to which Coetzee refers, are temporally located in this context, in the clash between systems and perceptions imposed by one culture upon another, and as Pringle struggles with these problems, so his poetry gains a particular place in that struggle and in that history. As Klopper rightly asserts, 'the political function of the colonial pastoral eludes those critics who censure Pringle for his inappropriate style.'<sup>46</sup>

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43 E. R. Seary, 'Some Notes On "The Condition of South African English Literature"', *Standpunte*, 4 (1950), p. 89.

44 Clouts, p. 74.

45 Coetzee, p. 171.

46 Klopper, 'Politics of the Pastoral: The Poetry of Thomas Pringle,' *English in Africa*, 17 (1990), 21-60 (p. 32).

#### 1.1.4: Appraisal of Pringle's work.

Both Pringle's poetry and prose enjoyed wide success in terms of sales during the nineteenth century, particularly in England and South Africa.<sup>47</sup> In the latter years of this century, however, his prose has been virtually unread, though his South African verse is now available in Pereira and Chapman's well-edited publication of *Poems Illustrative of South Africa*. As we have seen, Pringle has been criticised both negatively and positively, on the grounds of his hybrid national identity, his place in the English tradition of South African poetry, and the appropriateness of the metropolitan poetical codes he was using. Much of the assessment, however, has been biased by a limited knowledge of the range of Pringle's works, and a failure to take its historical and social context into account. Lewin Robinson, for instance, feels that Pringle's verse is not of great quality: though Pringle 'thought of himself as a poet, it is in his prose that his lasting contribution to literature must lie.'<sup>48</sup> Robinson does not explain himself. Could it be that he believes that Pringle's poetry no longer affects its modern readers, or that Pringle's message is lacking in power, etc.? Questions like this are difficult, if not impossible, to answer conclusively. In an academic context, the appraisal of a work by certain writers and critics is a means of understanding that work more closely, not the final word on it.

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<sup>47</sup> The bibliography contains a list of some of the more important nineteenth century reviews of Pringle's work.

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48 Lewin Robinson, p. xi.

In general, Pringle has had two groups of critics. There are those, like Coleridge, who are concerned only with an aesthetic appreciation of his work. The larger group, however, have from the earliest times been more concerned with Pringle's motivation for writing and its effect, because of its political and moral content. Although Pringle's friend Leitch Ritchie exaggerates when he claims that in Pringle's poetry 'every line has its definite object - every picture its moral purpose,' Pringle's political 'purpose', rather than his poetic excellence, is often seen as one of the most important factors when analysing his success as a poet, particularly with regard to his South African poetry.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, Pringle's political effect, rather than the quality of his poetry, was first commented upon in South Africa. The *Cape of Good Hope Literary Gazette* (4 September, 1834) reviewed Pringle's *African Sketches* using a particularly menacing metaphor:

Pringle's new work is causing a shaking among the dry bones of the Colony. It has been aptly termed a *bunch of whip-cord*; it must certainly prove lacerating to much of the proud flesh around us.

An example of a negative reaction to Pringle's ideas appears in the *Grahamstown Journal* (2 January 1835), just after the Xhosa invasion of the colony. Pringle is represented as the agent of the colonial Other, or the Xhosa 'enemy':<sup>50</sup>

What!! a Briton! and one who is the conspicuous organ of all the real or apparent philanthropists of the day - the man (shall I call him a man) who pretends to shudder at the proper chastisement of a rebellious domestic [...] and whose heart, one would suppose, would sicken at the very idea of blood, - to sit down and pen such an oration as the one to which I allude - good God! [...]

49 Leitch Ritchie, *A biographical Sketch of the Life of Thomas Pringle* (London: Moxon, 1838), p. xcii, in *The Poetical Works of Thomas Pringle*, ed. by Leitch Ritchie.

50 It should be remembered while reading the following quotation that Pringle had already died in December 1834.



What have we done to call down this dreadful, this ferocious treatment? What have we done to this Pringle that he should thus endeavour, and it seems so fatally, to draw down the horrid vengeance of the unsparing assegai upon our defenceless and, till now, peaceful homes. [...] It [will be] well remembered, [that] Mr. Thomas Pringle once was [a British settler in Albany], and would have remained so, had he not found that to be outrageously philanthropic and charitable at other people's expense was a far more profitable and luxurious occupation. [...]

I hear that Mr. Pringle is now in Cape-Town, if so, why does he not hasten to take the lead of his beloved Kafirs, of the never-treacherous, never treaty-breaking, Amakosa?<sup>51</sup>

In the poem 'Makanna's Gathering' the prophet Makanna's call to his people to revenge themselves against injustice, 'To sweep the White Men from the earth, / and drive them to the sea' (lines 11-12) is certainly uncompromising. Because Pringle presents Makanna's cause as being justified, it is not surprising that the poem would elicit such a negative reaction from many colonists. The poem was evidently successful because its assailant in the *Grahamstown Journal* was unable to criticise Pringle's argument, but was forced to resort to personal vilification.

Pringle's South African poetry became aimed more and more, as in the case of the 'Bechuana Boy', 'to excite some sympathy in very common readers [...] I mean women, children, counting house clerks, country functionaries & Aides de Camp, etc.'<sup>52</sup> In August 1829, Pringle writes that '*Condensation and simplicity are now my great aims in any political attempts, for without these I am satisfied that nothing I may write will live - or deserve to live - and many of my early pieces are very deficient, especially in the former of these qualities.*'<sup>53</sup> If Pringle's aim, as became apparent after his African residence, was specifically to communicate ideas with simplicity and for a moral purpose, then we cannot blame this poetry, as does Brink, for 'the lack of a

51 Quoted in *The British Humanitarians and the Cape Eastern Frontier, 1834-1836*, J. G. Pretorius (Pretoria: The Government Printer, 1988), pp. 51-52. The oration alluded to is 'Makanna's Gathering'.

52 Pringle to Fairbairn, 12 October 1825, in Pereira and Chapman, p. 77.

53 Pringle to an unknown correspondent, 29 August 1829, in Pereira and Chapman, p. 78.

metaphysical stratum.'<sup>54</sup> Brink claims that 'Pringle can never rank with the great Romantics'.<sup>55</sup> A reappraisal of Pringle's work, however, can interrogate such simplistic notions of Romanticism.<sup>56</sup>

On the level of style, Pringle's poetic method did have certain stylistic failings, such as occasional faulty metre, stereotyped images, or loosely applied adjectives, yet there is enough of Romantic (and Augustan) poetic excellence in his work to back Hay's claim that Pringle was a 'true Poet' in a conventional, literary sense.<sup>57</sup> Miller and Sergeant claim that 'Pringle's real failure lies not in what he had to say, but in his inability to say it better than he did.'<sup>58</sup> Pringle himself was aware that his poetry was not perfect - though there are moments of excellence.<sup>59</sup> In a self-reflexive moment in 'The Emigrants', he calls his verse 'artless':

65           And such were they whose tale I now rehearse-  
               But not to fashion's minions, who in vain  
               Would ask amusement from the artless verse  
               Of one who sings to soothe long hours of pain:  
               A nameless exile o'er the southern main,  
               I pour 'mid savage wilds my pensive song;  
               And if some gentle spirits love the strain  
               Enough for me, though midst the louder throng  
               Few may be found to prize, or listen to it long.<sup>60</sup>

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54 Brink, p. 61.

55 Brink, p. 5.

56 Recent work on Romanticism and Empire, such as Nigel Leask's *British Romantic Writers and the East*, to name but one example, have contributed greatly to the reinterpretation of Romantic ideology and writing practices in relation to British imperialism.

57 William Hay, ed., *Thomas Pringle: His Life, Times, and Poems* (Cape Town: Juta, 1912), p. 61.

58 G. M. Miller and Howard Sergeant, *A Critical Survey of South African Poetry in English* (Cape Town, 1957), p. 24.

59 'Thomas Pringle undoubtedly had taste and some literary skill. Although he perpetrated some very bad lines, he was never merely fulsome or ridiculous', in Partridge, 'The Condition of South African English Literature', *Standpunte*, 4 (1950), p. 23.

60 In Pereira and Chapman, p. 133.

'From these lines,' says D. H. Thomson, 'you may gather that Pringle himself set no great store by his poetry. He regarded it as an anodyne; an escape from the hours spent in physical duress, and, always sincere, he expected us to accept his offerings in similar manner.'<sup>61</sup> Thomson's comment, however, based on only a few self-reflexive lines, fails to take account of the bulk of Pringle's work which actively seeks to engage the audience for moral or propagandistic reasons. Pringle was always modest about his poetic achievements, but he regarded his poetry as most valuable when it dealt with matters of oppression. When Pringle succeeded in moving readers to pity, or exciting concern in them for his cause, then his poetry must be regarded as successful on his own terms. For a modern, radical audience, the poetry remains largely unsuccessful because, as Calder notes, it is often 'too genteel' for contemporary tastes and is, at times informed by the 'dead hand of Evangelical Christianity'.<sup>62</sup> To many of Pringle's contemporaries, both in Britain and South Africa, much of the poetry was unacceptable because of its liberal and moral content, perhaps the very reason for the enduring interest shown by critics in the poetry today.

Finally, we should consider the breadth of Pringle's writing, for to concentrate on his poetry alone, as most critics have done, is to ignore the major volume of his work, as well as the gradually increasing connection Pringle himself felt to exist between his poetry and prose.

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<sup>61</sup> D. H. Thomson, 'The Life and Work of Thomas Pringle', a lecture (Glen Thorn: Eric Pringle, 1961), p. 5.

<sup>62</sup> Calder, p. 205.

### 1.1.5: Pringle as poet and political journalist

Pringle's contributions to the social and literary climates of Edinburgh, Cape Town and London, as editor of and contributor to several major journals, newspapers and annuals have largely been ignored. His ideological and material contributions to the anti-slavery debate have hardly been considered. Pringle is known mostly as a poet because his travel narrative is largely unavailable. A recent edition of Pringle's major non-poetical work, the *Narrative of a Residence in South Africa*, edited by A. M. Lewin Robinson in 1966, was limited to an expensive edition of 750 copies. Before this, the last of six editions by Edward Moxon in London, appeared in 1858. Pringle's *Narrative* has suffered a fate of near oblivion, though it has been used extensively by historians of the Cape. Pringle is viewed primarily as a poet, rather than a writer, journalist or political activist because of the fact that few people have taken adequate account of his other writing.

The *Narrative's* few recent readers, however, have noted that it is a book of both literary and historic importance, though they have mostly been vague about the nature of this importance. Lewin Robinson, in his introduction to the *Narrative*, proclaims the book's quality, but couches it within a wider description of Thomas Pringle, so that his proclamation remains unilluminated:

Thomas Pringle, whose major literary work this book is, whatever his ranking as a minor poet, was a familiar figure in Edinburgh with his untidy clothes and his inseparable crutch during the second decade of the last century.<sup>63</sup>

Sidney Clouts says of Pringle that 'his most notable literary achievement is the *Narrative of a Residence in South Africa*, a document of unusual value and quality,' but

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63 A. M. Lewin Robinson, Introduction to *Narrative*, p. ix.



does not justify this, as his principal concern is with the poetry.<sup>64</sup> He says that 'Pringle's life in South Africa encompassed with unusual integrity the activities of settler, reformer and poet,'<sup>65</sup> but adds that he was 'rather more the reformer than the poet.'<sup>66</sup> Lewin Robinson and Clouts both assert that the *Narrative* is a work of literature, not simply an historical document, but go no further.

The lack of interest shown by South African publishers in the *Narrative* could possibly be explained by a number of factors. Firstly, renewed interest in Romantic period travel narratives is a fairly recent phenomenon. Secondly, Pringle's version of the history of the Cape from 1820-1826 did not coincide with the officially sanctioned versions of the same history written for the Christian National Education of South African government schools during the Apartheid era. As the history of South Africa is being rapidly re-written now, however, there is a need for a greater familiarity with crucial historical documents of this sort. Another reason for publishers' hesitancy may be that *African Sketches* defies neat generic classification, whether as travel writing, political philosophy, fiction or history. Be that as it may, Ernest Pereira and Michael Chapman in their introduction to Pringle's *African Poems* have attributed literary and moral interest to the *Narrative*:

The first part of Pringle's *Narrative* abounds in interest, ranging from a detailed description of a Boer stock-farmer's 'hartebeest-huis' and way of life, to an encounter with an elephant and a near-tragic lion-hunt. Of special interest too are his accounts of such recent events as the Slagter's Nek rebellion of 1815 and the ill-fated attack of the prophet Makanna on Grahamstown in 1818, as well as his description of the flora and fauna of the Eastern Cape and of the indigenous races - their origins, customs, and experiences at the hands of the white men. In the vivid reportage, the hand and eye of a trained journalist are always evident, but Pringle's *Narrative*, unlike many other 'colonial commentaries', sustains a coherent moral view. As Pringle enters into characters' thoughts and alternates between physical and mental action, readers are not only informed about, but are

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64 Clouts, p. 20.

65 Clouts, p. 86.

66 Clouts, p. 87.

encouraged to contemplate, the huge subject of possession and dispossession in South Africa. John Robert Doyle has gone as far as to describe sections of the *Narrative* as a summary for a historical novel of the period.<sup>67</sup>

Jacques Alvarez-Pereyre, a French critic, has called it 'the first classic of South African colonial literature,' and likened it to the works of Thoreau.<sup>68</sup> Pringle's combination of factual and subjective description, of poetic and prosaic journalism, as well as his moral view, certainly deserve closer attention, not least because Pringle himself asks that his 'African Poems' be read in conjunction with the *Narrative*:

[*African Sketches*] presents, in the first place, an unusual combination of Verse and Prose - not blended, but bound together, like the Siamese Twins, by a ligature which perhaps may appear equally unnecessary and unnatural. Yet in the present case, as in that of the singular human anomaly referred to, the junction, though originating in accident, will be found, on closer examination, to be of a nature so intimate, that it could be scarcely dissevered without endangering the *vitality* of the separate parts.<sup>69</sup>

By its nature, travel narrative represents a literary response to a new environment. This is particularly evident in many Romantic period travelogues.<sup>70</sup> I cannot agree, therefore, with Brink when he says that 'Pringle achieved very little in the way of true artistic creation. [...] His contribution to our literature is mainly of cultural and historical importance.'<sup>71</sup> We can learn, from Pringle's prose *Narrative*, the relationship which he felt necessary between poetry and prose in his new environment. The 'ligature' binding the two complicates Brink's simple criticism that Pringle's purpose in poetry is 'not poetic, but propagandistic', and suggests that his poetry should be reinterpreted in the

67 Pereira and Chapman, pp. xvi-xvii.

68 Alvarez-Pereyre, p. 54.

69 In Pereira and Chapman, p.138. See chapter seven for further discussion of this passage.

70 See, for instance, Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Short Residence in Sweden*, ed. by Richard Holmes (1796; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987).

71 Brink, p. v.



context of his political project.<sup>72</sup> By 1834, Pringle's treatment of oppression in prose, journalism and poetry was as serious as it was consistent. It is Pringle's seriousness in his poetry and prose, conditioned by the political reality of his South African and anti-slavery experience, that differentiates the content, though rarely the form, of his poetry from that of many other romantic poets.<sup>73</sup> The themes of oppression, slavery and the exotic were common in Romantic (and Augustan) verse. As David Dabydeen notes, somewhat scathingly:

From the 1770's onwards England was deluged with anti-slavery verse, the sheer bulk of it, and the bewildering variety of poetical expressions (odes, pastorals, eclogues, sonnets, doggerel, even creole jingles) being an overwhelming aspect of the literary history of the period. There is little evidence to suggest that any of these poets devoted any personal time or effort, or dug deep into their pockets, to support the abolition cause. Indeed, it is more probable that the theme of slavery fed them, providing an opportunity for grubs and hacks to indulge in sentiment, to try out verse techniques, and to make some money by either capitalising on popular feelings or else by cashing in on the latest sensational revelation in the newspapers of West Indian brutalities.<sup>74</sup>

These accusations can certainly not be levelled at Pringle.<sup>75</sup> Pringle's commitment, as well as his unique political experience, demanded the convergence of poetry and prose, as Pringle called it, a 'ligature' which struggled to bind the poetry closer to political reality in order to render it less gratuitous than the poetry of which Dabydeen speaks. The link Pringle envisioned between his poetry and prose makes a general overview of his work even more pressing.

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<sup>72</sup> Brink, p. 48.

<sup>73</sup> 'Pringle was not merely an admirer of the 'noble savage', in common with many of his European contemporaries, he was truly and genuinely opposed to tyranny and oppression in any form,' Alvarez-Pereyre, p. 54.

<sup>74</sup> David Dabydeen, 'Eighteenth-century English literature on commerce and slavery', in *The Black Presence in English literature*, ed. by David Dabydeen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 29-49 (p. 44).

<sup>75</sup> For instance, Pringle makes a firm point in his preface to *The History of Mary Prince* that all the proceeds of the publication will be given to 'Mary Prince' herself.

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Pringle progressively viewed writing in general as a political weapon, a recognition which grew stronger in him during and after his residence in South Africa. This had both positive and negative consequences. Negative, in the sense that Pringle's work found little favour amongst those who did not support his liberal politics, especially in the Cape. Positive, in that his writings, though causing him financial ruin and making him enemies, moulded his political career. Pringle's essay 'On the Present State of the English Emigrants in South Africa' which appeared in the *South African Journal* for March 1824, then under his editorship, led to the confrontation with Somerset which was to force him to leave the country. Another essay, 'On the State of Slavery in the Cape' published in the *New Monthly Magazine*, London, October 1826, provoked great interest and led to his appointment as secretary to the Anti-Slavery Society, a position he would hold for the rest of his life.

It is difficult to ascertain exactly how much Pringle wrote against slavery. His friend Leitch Ritchie's brave assertion that Pringle 'was the originator of at least half of what was then published in Britain against slavery,'<sup>76</sup> is exaggerated, but, as A. D. Hall states, when Pringle 'became secretary of the Anti-Slavery society, [...] much of its literature came from his pen.'<sup>77</sup> Considering that the Anti-Slavery Society published just under three million copies of various tracts between 1823-1831 alone, his ideas were certainly well publicised.<sup>78</sup> His specifically anti-slavery writings were noted at the time. *The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave. Related by Herself*<sup>79</sup> ran to three editions and provoked a bitter response in right-wing British journals of the day.<sup>80</sup> Facts related in his essays such as 'Remarks on the Demoralizing Influence of Slavery / By a

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<sup>76</sup> Hay, p. 53.

<sup>77</sup> A. D. Hall, 'Pringle, Somerset and Press Freedom', *English Studies in Africa*, 3 (1960), 160-178 (p. 176).

<sup>78</sup> James Walvin, 'The Propaganda of Anti-Slavery', in *Slavery and British Society*, ed. by J. Walvin (London: Macmillan, 1982), pp. 49-68 (p. 60).

<sup>79</sup> Published by F. Westley and A. H. Davis, London, 1831.

<sup>80</sup> See chapter 6.1.

Resident of the Cape of Good Hope'<sup>81</sup> appear in the works and lectures of many other people associated with the Anti-Slavery campaign.<sup>82</sup> 'Pangola, an African Tale', was published in *The Remembrance* for 1831.

Apart from his writings against slavery - and the *Narrative* can be viewed in part as belonging to this group - he contributed to several newspapers, most notably in his campaign against Lord Charles Somerset:

Independent and full of courage as ever, Pringle preferred to rely on his own resources. He conducted his own anti-Somerset campaign in a number of lively opposition newspapers and journals, started in much the same way as the free press had been pioneered at the Cape; and the *Oriental Herald* established by James Silk Buckingham and the *Colonial Review* were responsive mediums for his attacks.<sup>83</sup>

Pringle's essays, journalism and the *Narrative* were used on several occasions as evidence for the Commission of Enquiry investigating allegations against Somerset. He was consulted by the Commission on the treatment of the Khoikhoi,<sup>84</sup> and his frontier policies, as found in the *Narrative*, were used by members of the British Parliament such as Lord Glenelg and Thomas Fowell Buxton.<sup>85</sup> Thomas Pringle was influential as a political lobbyist as well as a poet, for instance, as editor of *Friendship's Offering* from 1828-1834. This was one of the most successful albums of its time, publishing poems by most of the major living writers, including the first published poems of the

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81 Published by Bagster and Thoms, London, 1828.

82 For example, the tale of L. Gebhardt who was executed for murdering a slave in the Cape in 1822. His final words, which became famous through Pringle were: 'Sir, slavery is a bad system, it is even worse for the masters than it is for the slaves.' The Reverend Benjamin Godwin, for instance, quotes the *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, No. 32, p. 173, where this story as told by Pringle appears. See B. Godwin, *The Substance of a Course of Lectures on British Colonial Slavery Delivered at Bradford, York and Scarborough* (London: J Hatchard and Sons, 1830).

83 A. K. Millar, *Plantagenet in South Africa: Lord Charles Somerset* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 243. The *Oriental Herald* and the *Colonial Review*, referred to by Millar, were, in fact, the same journal, which was published as *The Oriental Herald and Colonial Review*. Pringle conducted his anti-Somerset campaign at length in *The Times* newspaper.

84 P. H. Kapp, *Dr John Philip: Die Grondlegger van Liberalisme in Suid-Afrika* (Pretoria: State Printers, 1985), p. 45.

85 Kapp, p. 194.

young Tennyson and Ruskin.<sup>86</sup> Pringle made his major contribution to the fight against oppression as the secretary to the Anti-Slavery Society. His portrayals of slavery and oppression in poetry, prose, propaganda and journalism helped to mould public opinion on these issues.

### **1.1.6: Summary**

Pringle was a man influenced by the culture and politics of Scotland, England and South Africa, and had, in turn, his influence in this British Imperial nexus. His work ranges in variety from Scottish ballads and songs to Romantic verse in an African context, from journalism to fiction and the slave narrative. Yet, as we have seen, his critics have concentrated only on specific areas of his writing, especially the South African poems, and, with a few notable exceptions, failed to situate it in the larger context of romantic period colonial verse and travelogue conventions. This dissertation will contribute to further critical interpretation of Pringle's work in the context of the British Imperial nexus by providing, in anticipation, a thorough, chronological exploration of the range and internal development of his work.

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<sup>86</sup> Kapp, p. 284.

## **2: Early Writing (1811-1820)**

This chapter will consider Pringle's published work from March 1811 - the date of his first publication - to his departure for the Cape of Good Hope in 1820. The title 'Early Writing' does not imply that Pringle's work during this period is coherent thematically or qualitatively, or that his attitudes towards his own poetry and journalism remain static between these dates. Grouping work into chronological blocks or units is always arbitrary to an extent, but it does provide a framework which facilitates investigation of a writer's development, the changing nature of his/her work, and his/her attitudes towards it. Furthermore, the work Pringle produced in Scotland can be effectively compared and contrasted, on the whole, with his output at the Cape. As mentioned in chapter one, Pringle, at the end of his career, envisioned a 'ligature' binding his poetry and prose together. Throughout this critical survey, investigations of his poetry and prose are juxtaposed in order to highlight the formation of this 'ligature', alongside the developing direction and focus of his political project.



## 2.1: Poetry (1811-1820)

*The Institute*, a mock heroic poem in four cantos, was co-written by Pringle and his friend Robert Story while they were students at Edinburgh University.<sup>1</sup> It was published when Pringle was twenty two years old, and is the longest poem he ever completed. The poem is a satire on the Edinburgh Philomathic Society - a group of Edinburgh University students who are portrayed as having a raging thirst for fame and its financial benefits, as well as a pretentious desire to enlighten the world to the glories of science. The plot of the poem is fairly straightforward. The great classic writers from Ovid to Milton are dead. Error rules the world which is in a 'moral void' (p. 5), while Genius and Science slumber. Then, miraculously, the students of the Philomathic Society, and many others in Edinburgh, are suddenly enlightened. They become Statesmen, Economists, Poets and Divines (p. 13), almost overnight. The narrator is at a loss to explain 'how empty heads with sudden sense were fraught?' (p. 12). The newly enlightened group gathers together in order to achieve fame through their science, which comes from heaven. The four most vocal members of this group praise their particular fields - statistics, metaphysics, rhetoric and oratory, and physics - and hope that through the practise of these they will become the 'ILLUMINATORS of Mankind' (p. 27). The problem is that they have neither public lectureships nor any money: 'Though stor'd with Learning, Science, Talents, Sense, / Alas! Alas! they were not stor'd with *Pence!*' Consequently, they decide to form the 'Institute' in order to use their learning to make themselves famous and rich. They enlist the support of two eminent but comically portrayed professors of the university as their patrons. The professors

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1 Thomas Pringle & Robert Story, *The Institute*, (Edinburgh: W. McWilliam, 1811).



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1 Thomas Pringle & Robert Story, *The Institute*, (Edinburgh: W. McWilliam, 1811).

are ecstatic about the plans. One of them leaps with joy like a 'Moorish monarch in a morrice dance' (p. 38). The newly formed institute convenes its first meeting and agrees to educate all those averse to science, like 'Drapers, Grocers, etc.' (p. 52). They also express a desire to educate women, but only with the aim of seducing them, as it appears afterwards. Soon, they believe, even infants will be whispering 'The Institute' (p. 54). They will teach astronomy, rhetoric, elocution, chemistry, morals, law, etc., but all in a 'scientific scheme', and not from traditional perspectives. At the end of the meeting, they sing a rousing anthem. The sound spreads out over the rooftops of Edinburgh, and then over the whole of Scotland. All who hear it 'grow tame' (p. 58) and are suddenly enlightened. The narrator ends then with the belief that the 'Institute' will 'wake the Negro & the Lapland Savage' (p. 62). Even the fishes in the sea will be converted to science. Finally, the narrator promises to sing in further volumes the future history of the 'Institute' as it unfolds.

No further volumes, of course, were forthcoming. Indeed, the poem brought little fame to either Pringle or Story, probably because much of its humour lies in the satire and parody of a few individuals who are unnamed in the poem.<sup>2</sup> The humour is often personal and restricted to the group being criticised, and, thus, the poem loses force as an otherwise engaging and humorous critique of Scottish society in general and the Edinburgh Enlightenment in particular. It has never been republished, and so is mostly unknown to readers of Pringle. It is important to note that Pringle's impulse to satirise his contemporaries and current day society is already present in his earliest published work. The satirical strain which underpins

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<sup>2</sup> Pringle is quoted by Ritchie as saying that the poem brought 'more empty praise than solid pudding.' In Hay, p. 16.

much Romantic period poetry, however, is often not evident in Pringle's early poems, which are hardly ever satirical and can best be described as sentimental - love poems and poems mourning the loss of youth or the death and departure of friends.<sup>3</sup>

*The Institute* demonstrates a keen sense of parody and humour. Though there are no exact parallels in content with Pope's satires, there are many similarities, which root *The Institute* firmly in the Augustan satirical tradition. For instance, Pringle and Story use the decasyllabic metre most often employed by Pope: 'Each quondam Dunce felt now so flush'd and full, / With brains unwonted scheming in his scull' (p. 12). The world of *The Institute* is ruled by the goddess 'Error', just as the goddess 'Dullness' rules in the *Dunciad*. Classical allusions, literary cross-references and personifications are ubiquitous. Furthermore, the poem relies strongly on hyperbole in order to dramatise an otherwise unimportant event, a technique used in Pope's *Rape of the Lock*, as the inscription on the title page makes clear: 'An ancient *Bard* hath soothly sung / Of mice from labouring mountains sprung, / But **we** have stranger facts to count on - / Our modern MOUSE brings forth a MOUNTAIN!'

The ideological stance of the poem's narrator, though often obscure, also throws some light on Pringle's beliefs at the time. The satire of *The Institute* relies on the implicit assumption that science in fact cannot defeat the 'rule of error' or fill a 'moral void', while the protagonists, who are praised ironically throughout the piece, maintain exactly the opposite. Curiously, though, it is difficult to discover from the narrator what the alternatives to scientific enlightenment are. It is clear that the narrator is an anti-Enlightenment figure, suspicious of the optimism generated

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3 Pereira and Chapman call Pringle 'a seasoned satirist and parodist,' by the end of his career. Pereira and Chapman, p. xxiii.

by the belief that certainty through science could be achieved in most spheres of human knowledge, but he does not reject knowledge, science or academia in themselves. Religion in general, or Christianity in particular, are not mentioned as viable alternatives. It is, after all, a satire. There is a sense in the poem, though, that rationalists ignore the history and the wisdom contained in 'classic' literature at their peril. Although the narrator claims that all the classics are lost and forgotten at the beginning of the piece, the poem is peppered with Latin quotations which offer an ironic commentary on the narrator's own words.

A further clue to the authors' attitude is offered with the mention of Ferguson and Stewart. Adam Ferguson (1723-1816) and Dugald Stewart (1753-1828) are the only two Scottish thinkers mentioned in the poem to be exempted from the charge of being dunces or ruled by error. Ferguson had held the chair of moral philosophy at Edinburgh University, before Stewart, and both men were still widely influential in 1811. Ferguson, author of the *History of Civil Society* (1767), a friend and follower of David Hume, and successor to Adam Smith, held a developmental view of human progress (which, as we will see, Pringle held throughout his life) contrary to *The Institute's* belief in sudden and miraculous enlightenment.<sup>4</sup> Both Ferguson and Stewart (who had been ordained in Protestant churches, though Ferguson later rejected the clergy), were sceptical, like Hume, of the enlightenment ideals of certainty achieved by science as satirised in the poem.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, Stewart was regarded as the glory of the party for the young Whigs

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4 This historical scheme of social change, that is, from hunting to pasturage, then farming and commerce, is outlined by Voss in 'Thomas Pringle and the Image of the "Bushman",' *English in Africa*, 9 (1982), 15-28 (pp. 15-17). Voss says: 'Perhaps most important, these philosophers pictured society as in constant change, driven by the active will of man seeking to improve the material conditions of life, and they stressed that in societies, "as [the mode of subsistence] varies, their laws and policies must be different",' p. 17.

5 See J. D. Mackie, *A History of Scotland*, 2nd edn, revised and edited by Bruce Lenman and Geoffrey Parker, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1978), p. 307.

in Tory-dominated Edinburgh, so it is likely that, as a Whig, Pringle's political sentiments would have concurred with his. From this, it appears that a combination of scepticism, liberalism, and theism, though not organised religion, are the values approved of by the narrator as safeguards against the 'moral void.' Such ideas are not explored in the poem, however, with the result that the satire does not seem to be generated from any well conceived moral or philosophical point of view. This confusion may well reflect a lack of clarity about these issues in Pringle and Story's minds at the time, but the poem does give an early indication of where their sympathies lay, that is, that knowledge and wisdom might lie in sceptical belief and an analysis of the history of civilisation, rather than in sudden Romantic insight. It is worth noting, however, that *The Institute* does not tackle any social or political problems of its day. Instead it contents itself with criticism of the abstract idea of enlightenment. This is very different from Pringle's final publication, *African Sketches*, which caused a stir at the Cape because it was in part an active attack on the colony's political system.

The satirical tension in the poem is, then, that it calls implicitly for less fancy and abstraction, and for a moral view of the world grounded in sceptical belief and analysis, but the call remains entirely unpoliticised in itself. Most of Pringle's poetry written before 1820 is apolitical, concentrating rather on sentimental and moral themes. Pringle averts most frequently to issues of morality and taste when commenting on the work of others, as appears from his remarks in a letter to the Provost Fairbairn (23 March 1813) where he comments on a new play called 'The Heiress of Stratheason or the rash marriage!':

It is written by Pinkerton the Geographer & I am informed that the plot of the story bears upon a case of Incest! For which two weighty reasons I expect to hear of its damnation. The moral feelings of an Edinb. audience cannot tolerate such outrages - and their good taste, I think, will scarcely tolerate Mr. P.'s clumsy pedantic & timid style.<sup>6</sup>

Pringle has a sharp and witty tongue as a critic, which rarely surfaces in his early poetry, other than in *The Institute*. The first useful evidence we have of Pringle's taste in poetry, is a collection he made titled 'A Selection of Sonnets, Songs & Other Poems / Chiefly from the Works of living Authors,' dated 1 January 1814 and dedicated to his sister Mary.<sup>7</sup> These poems, on the whole, may best be described as sentimental, their recurrent themes being those of young love, parting, loss, and memory restoring visions of childhood. These themes, the agenda of the contemporary sonnet, are ubiquitous in Pringle's first known attempt to collect his own poetry which survives as a holograph quire of 23 poems, dated 5 January 1816 (dedicated to his sister Mary).<sup>8</sup> Most of these were published in his first volume, *The Autumnal Excursion* (1819). As Brink states, these poems are 'immature and adolescent for the greater part,'<sup>9</sup> but they do serve as illustrations of Pringle's poetical interests at the time. I shall select a few poems for further discussion which are typical of Pringle's poetical practices.

The first of these is the sonnet 'To an Early Friend' (i.e. Robert Story), dated 1812, in which Pringle considers his role as a poet:

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6 FB:I:1, 23 March 1813.

7 Poems by Southey, Milton, Bowles, Wilson, Baillie, Smith, Lloyd, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Leyden, Moore and Paterson.

8 André De Villiers, 'Some unrecorded Pringle MSS', *QBSAL*, 27 (December 1972), 27-34.

9 Brink, p. 3.



## TO AN EARLY FRIEND

They called us brother bards: The same blue streams  
 Witnessed our youthful sports: our tears have sprung  
 Together, when those ancient tales were sung  
 That tinged our fancy's first and sweetest dreams -  
 Two simple boys bewitched with magic themes!  
 And still as riper years and judgement came,  
 On mutual couch we planned our mutual schemes,  
 Our tastes, our friendships, and our joys the same.  
 But not the same our task: Thy venturous lyre,  
 10 Which with the tide of genius swells or falls,  
 Shall charm tumultuous camps and courtly halls,  
 And rouse the warrior's arm and patriot's ire -  
 While I shall chant my simple madrigals  
 To smiling circles round the cottage fire.<sup>10</sup>

In the sestet, Pringle's role as a poet is conceived not as a Scottish national poet, but as a simple, country bard in a domestic setting, a purveyor of ancient tales and folkloric wisdom.<sup>11</sup> In the public/private dichotomy, Pringle is here disavowing Scott's style of (Tory) romance. According to the poem, his poetry will not be employed in the realm of politics, nor will it inspire patriotic ardour (as the 'smiling circles' attest).<sup>12</sup> Of course, this claim does not suggest that Pringle was not a patriot (and there are many examples of patriotism in his early poetry as there are in the poems of fellow 'border' poets like John Leyden) but merely expresses an intention not to be a political poet or to write poems which would rouse their

10 In Hay, p. 155.

11 As to the value of 'ancient tales', Pringle infers that their primary importance in literature is to create a sense of regional belonging, rather than to stir up patriotic fervour. In a note on the *Autumnal Excursion*, he quotes Walter Scott's introduction to *Sir Tristram*: 'Even a race of strangers, when the lapse of years has induced them no longer to account themselves such, welcome any fiction by which they can associate their ancestors with the scenes in which they themselves live, as transplanted trees push forth fibre that may connect them with the soil to which they are transferred' (p. 113). Pringle subsequently used the metaphor of transplantation in the *SACA*. See chapter three.

12 I shall return to Pringle's contrast between patriotic anger and the rural peace of the country cottage in my discussion of 'The Autumnal Excursion' later.



readers to patriotic anger.<sup>13</sup> Pringle's intention in 'To an Early Friend' to use the 'ancient tales' of Scottish folklore and Scottish history as an inspiration for his poetry demonstrates his admiration for the work of Walter Scott, yet his rendering of these tales is used for a different purpose.<sup>14</sup> As Scott showed, historical novels and poems could be used as very effective vehicles for criticising modern society or as ideological crusades, but when Pringle uses Scottish history as material for his poetry, the history is usually not analysed but merely recounted as part of a tradition. Furthermore, Pringle's early poems are generally very short and his oeuvre before 1820 so varied and small that it would be wrong to say that a fascination with Scottish history and lore is a defining feature of this early work, though it remains an important theme, especially in longer poems such as 'The Autumnal Excursion'.

Many of Pringle's early songs and airs which were written for traditional melodies are inspired by the Scottish balladic tradition.<sup>15</sup> But, in keeping with his promise to sing 'simple madrigals', they are usually light, simple and popular, and tend to narrate the personal feelings of ordinary individuals, rather than the political

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13 Perhaps Pringle had recognised that his attempt to change political and social attitudes by means of poetry, that is, in *The Institute* had been unsuccessful, and is recognising, here, his own limitations. Pringle was certainly active physically when it came to supporting worthwhile causes, as when the staging of Joanna Baillie's play, *The Family Legend*, was threatened by a potentially hostile male audience, simply because she was a woman: 'Before the time came [Pringle] had organized a body of forty or fifty young men, armed with clubs, who, as soon as the doors were opened, rushed into the house, and took possession of the centre of the pit. Every murmur of disapprobation was drowned by the simultaneous shout from this formidable corps, and amidst the cheering, clapping, and ruffing, the sound of their leader's heavy crutches was heard as distinctly as the knocks of Addison's trunkmaker.' In Hay, p. 15. Report from the *Spectator*, No. 235.

14 In terms of similarities, Brink says the following, though he misses the point: 'A marked correspondence between the work of Pringle and the poetical works of Sir Walter Scott is paralleled by a correspondence in interests. Like Scott, Pringle was lamed for life at the age of a few months, as a result of which he devoted most of his time to studying and reading. An early interest in fairy tales, tales of battle, and history is reflected in much of Pringle's poetry.' Brink, p. 2.

15 A few of Pringle's songs which were published as early as 1816 in *Albyn's Anthology* are still considered to be an active part of this tradition as they have been republished in several twentieth century anthologies; some were performed in Edinburgh as recently as 1993.

or romantic tales of heroes. Indeed, by 1816, Pringle had written only one poem besides *The Institute* which referred directly to contemporary issues:

TO SIR THOMAS GRAHAM (LORD LYNEDOCH)  
(On his return to Spain, March, 1813.)

Warrior - thou seek'st again the battle-field  
Where freedom hails afar thy soul of flame;  
And fall'n Iberia kindles at thy name,  
As 'neath the shade of England's guardian shield,  
She girds her armour on, and strives to wield  
Her long-forgotten lance. Yes, there thy fame  
Shall in the hymn of kindred hosts be sung  
Round Spain's romantic shores, when she has thrust  
10 The Spoiler from her homes, and proudly hung  
Her falchion on the wall - no more to rust!  
Bright gleams that vengeful blade, as when of yore  
It smote the Crescent on the Moslem's brow:  
Warrior! she hails in thee her CID once more,  
To conquer in a fiercer conflict now!<sup>16</sup>

In this jingoistic poem, which owes a stylistic debt both to Scott and Campbell, the poet's role is not to analyse the conflict, but merely to glorify the hero and to raise patriotic ardour. Of course, this is in complete contradiction to Pringle's statement in 'To an early friend', but the poem is notable as an exception. In general, Pringle praises patriotic feeling in the works of others (see 'To the Poet Campbell'), but attempts to avoid political and patriotic issues himself.

While expressions of patriotism do occur in Pringle's early poetry, he views his own poetry as being concerned with more sentimental stories and issues. If the poetry has been inspired by contemporary events, then these events are not usually evident in the poem. For instance, in 'I'll bid my Heart be Still,' a woman laments the loss of her lover in battle, then pledges to remain faithful to him:

16 In Hay, p. 158. The original autograph is in a letter to James Hogg, March 1813, NLS 2245.ff.1. The final couplet of the original, 'Warrior, She calls thee from thy native shore, / To lead her to a fiercer conflict now!' is less indicative of inevitable victory than the final version. Lynedoch was the commander of part of Wellington's forces in Spain.

While minstrels wake the lay  
 For peace and freedom won,  
 Like my lost lover's knell  
 The tones seem to swell,  
 15 And I hear but his death-dirge alone!

My cheek has lost its hue,  
 My eye grows faint and dim;  
 But 'tis sweeter to fade  
 In grief's gloomy shade  
 Than to bloom for another than him!<sup>17</sup>

Pringle claims in his notes to *The Autumnal Excursion* that this poem was 'written a few weeks after the battle of Waterloo.'<sup>18</sup> Without this note, however, there would be no way of knowing that the poem had to do with an actual event. The female narrator, like the poet, leaves the telling of the 'peace and freedom won' to another 'minstrel', while she concentrates on her own sense of resolve and despair.

Often, the sentiments expressed by Pringle concerning love are entirely abstract, as in the poem 'Azla', where the poet wanders through the 'thymy vales' of Teviot demanding of nature the whereabouts of Azla, the 'Fairy of [his] dreams.'<sup>19</sup> Eventually, she does encounter the poet at the designated trysting tree, and their meeting, as in all of Pringle's early poetry, is not particularly erotic:

55 Ah no! She fails not! 'Mong these bowers  
 Young Love, I ween, delights to dwell,  
 And spends his most entrancèd hours  
 In Contemplation's hermit cell;  
 Where votaries of a gentle mood  
 Find him with Truth and Solitude.

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17 In Hay, pp. 132-133.

18 *Autumnal Excursion; or Sketches in Teviotdale; with other Poems* (Edinburgh: Constable, London: Longman, 1819), p. 135.

19 In Hay, p. 103.

The grand concepts of 'Truth' and 'Solitude' are introduced suddenly at the end of the poem and function merely as truisms, which are as abstract as the figure of Azla herself. The poem, like many of the poems dealing with love, is one in which the poet, in close contact with, and influenced by, nature, suddenly expresses lofty sentiments. This does not accord well with the idea of the poet singing 'simple madrigals / To smiling circles round the cottage fire,' but, Pringle shows that he is aware of the distinction between fancy induced by nature and solitude, and the reality of domestic love.<sup>20</sup> In 'Song' (dated 1807), Pringle returns to the home:

I love by the haunted tower lonely to linger,  
           A-dreaming, to Fancy's sweet witchery given,  
 15     And hear, lightly swept by unseen fairy finger,  
           The Harp of the Winds - the wild music of Heaven.

### III

Yet, oh! there is something awanting  
           Which Solitude ne'er can supply!  
 For friendship my bosom is panting -  
 20     For looks that to mine might reply:  
 I sigh for the friend with kindred devotion  
           To worship fair Nature by mountain and grove -  
 I sigh for Eliza! - with dearer emotion -  
           To lighten the home that is hallow'd by love!<sup>21</sup>

Just as Pringle shows an admiration for patriotic poetry, but prefers to write 'simple madrigals', he shows a preference here for the hearth rather than the heath. Even though Pringle occasionally introduces concepts like 'Truth' and 'Solitude' into this poetry, 'simple' is the adjective he employs most frequently to describe his own poetry (both in his poems and in the notes to them). Obviously, it serves

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<sup>20</sup> Indeed, Pringle's early songs tend to concentrate on simple emotions rather than on lofty sentiments like 'Truth' or 'Solitude'. For instance, the song 'The Dark-Haired Maid' is a joyous celebration of consummated love, as a man takes a wife from the lowlands to the highlands: 'And she is mine - the dark-haired Maid! / My bright, my beauteous Mary! - / The flower of Ardyn's lowly glade, / Shall bloom in high Glengary!' (lines 24-27, Hay, p. 138).

<sup>21</sup> In *Autumnal Excursion*, p. 54.

to portray him as being self-effacing and modest in comparison with greater talents, a standard idea of the poetry of sensibility, but it must also refer to the issues of subject matter and style. As far as style is concerned, a comment of Pringle's on the eighteenth century poet James Thomson, a fellow Scots Borderer, is instructive. Thomson was the poet who:

first burst the servile trammels of French taste and verbal criticism  
(imported with other nuisances at the Restoration), and brought  
back the English public to nature and true poetry<sup>22</sup>

Pringle supports the Wordsworthian ideal of style as being somehow 'simple' because it is 'natural', a product of nature. Wordsworth's poetry of nature is, of course, far from being simple, as he strove to make it a product of his own complex philosophical and contemplative interaction with nature. Pringle recognises this in the sonnet 'To The Poet Wordsworth' (1820), when he says that 'poets are Nature's priests' (line 1), who have the power to unveil her mysteries to the nations.<sup>23</sup> This idea of poetry is not consistent with the idea of the 'simple madrigal', which is far less serious in content and intent, being a simple (often amorous) poem, as many of his early poems are. Pringle admired poetry which could either draw deep lessons and truths about life from a contemplation of nature, or poetry which was politically important and which could raise patriotic fervour.<sup>24</sup> In both areas, however, Pringle is humble - or fearful - and retreats to his simple country cottage, though he attempts what he called the poetry of nature and truth occasionally.<sup>25</sup>

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22 In *Autumnal Excursion*, p. 115.

23 In Hay, p. 160.

24 See the sonnet 'To The Poet Campbell', in Hay, p. 160, where Pringle praises Campbell's 'patriot strains'.

25 As Pringle says in his preface to *The Autumnal Excursion* (5 January 1819): 'Of the Miscellaneous Pieces, the greater part are also [i.e. as well as 'The Autumnal Excursion'] early

One such poem is Pringle's major work of the period, which first brought him to some notice in the eyes of the Scottish literary establishment.<sup>26</sup> It was published anonymously in 1816 in James Hogg's *Poetic Mirror* under the title 'Epistle to R.S.' - where it was generally thought to be the production of Walter Scott - and later headed Pringle's first volume of poetry under the title 'The Autumnal Excursion' (1819).<sup>27</sup> It is a definitive poem for Pringle in the sense that it combines nearly all the themes and preoccupations of his poetry in this period.<sup>28</sup>

In 'The Autumnal Excursion', the poet invites his childhood friend, Robert Story, to wander through the hills and vales of Teviotdale with him in order to save, at least partially, some memories of the past which are being destroyed by Time and Fortune.<sup>29</sup> The poem is about these 'Pictured relics of the Past' (line 13). The poet wonders then whether they should roam through an autumnal scene in England. But, he decides, even though English pastoral scenes might warm the heart, 'a wild and lone' (line 43) scene in Scotland is preferable to the 'richest bower that Autumn yields / 'Midst merry England's cultured fields' (lines 50-51). The wildness and solitude of the Border's mountains are more conducive to pensiveness (lines 40-49), and, thus, a prospect of Border scenery unlocks a prospect on the poet's own memory and childhood. Here, Pringle, like

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productions, - composed, amid the scenes they describe, to amuse the Summer solitude of College vacations.' The introductory poem to the *Autumnal Excursion* calls the anthology a 'humble present of good will.'

26 For instance, from James Hogg: 'Dear Tam, I never met with any person who thought more of the poem than I did there are but few that can appreciate such a poem and Mr Scott is one of those few who gave it all due praise.' Hogg to Pringle, 1 February 1819, Bodleian: MS Montagu d. 4, 260.

27 According to Pringle, it was written in August 1811. I will use the 1828 text as found in Hay, though, as this does not differ substantially from the first surviving version of 1816, or the one of 1819, and because it is the most readily available text.

28 The poem, as reflected in the title, owes a debt to Wordsworth's *Excursion*, and Leyden's *Scenes of Infancy: Descriptive of Teviotdale*. Calder also points out that the influence of Scott's 'Marmion' is 'overweeningly obvious', Calder, p. 8.

29 In Hay, pp. 63-82.



Wordsworth, is attempting to become one of 'Nature's priests', as, from the prospect of 'Cheviot's pathless mossy peak' (line 53), he scans the landscape and its rivers until 'the eye - the fancy almost fails / To trace them through their thousand vales' (lines 74-75). This sweep over the landscape produces the poet's first 'pictured relic of the past' which is a vision of Scotland's bloody and troubled history. Various stories are recounted 'Of men who dared alone be free / Amidst a nation's slavery' (lines 118-119). Their stories will be celebrated by the poet's lyre (line 120) - but not Pringle's own, by implication, as the poem does not dwell on these stories but merely mentions them in passing.

The narrator turns his eye to the real scenery again, but soon memories of classic lore, which he has read, force him to imagine the great battles fought in the Borders (lines 175-188). This recollection causes him to 'Weav[e] in fancy's tissue strange / The shapeless visions of revenge!' (lines 191-192). As A. D. Harvey notes, Richard Jago in 1767 'made an important innovation by introducing long historical disquisitions and battle scenes which started a fashion for poems blending history with natural description.'<sup>30</sup> Pringle uses this technique freely, but unlike Leyden in 'Scenes of Infancy', who adapts the technique to introduce discussion of contemporary issues such as slavery, and to juxtapose exotic elements with Scottish landscape, Pringle's eye keeps returning to the 'simple vale' (line 132), the 'simple home' (line 258), and the 'simple scene' (line 286) which was the home of his boyhood and which the 'traveller's glance would scarcely note' (line 285). This is the second and most important 'pictured relic of the past', which, after a recollection of outdoor pastimes, becomes centred on the hearth and local folklore:

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30 A. D. Harvey, *English Poetry in a Changing Society* (London: Allison and Busby, 1980), p. 37. The poem concerned is *Edge Hill, or the Rural Prospect delineated and moralized*, which appeared in four volumes.



But when day's hasty steps retire,  
 Still sweeter by the blazing fire,  
 In that low parlour's narrow bound,  
 To draw the social circle round;  
 345 Where no unwelcome step intrudes,  
 To check the heart's unstudied moods.  
 - Round flows the rural jest; the tale  
 Of Cloister in fair Clifton dale;  
 Of Weeping Spirit of the Glen;  
 Or Dragon of dark Wormeden;<sup>31</sup>

This leads on to a lengthy and often painfully sincere meditation on his own mother's death when he was six years old, and his attempts to cope with the loss through imagination and a belief in the afterlife. His dead mother, rather than the landscape, has become the focus of the poem. This meditation ends abruptly. There is a break in the poem and Pringle turns his attention to another formative influence of his youth, 'Old John Tumbull, for many years my father's shepherd, as his father had been shepherd to my grandfather: one of the worthiest and most generous-hearted men I ever knew.'<sup>32</sup>

490 Nor yet shall faithful memory fail  
 To trace the shepherd's homelier tale;  
 For well I loved each simple strain  
 Rehearsed by that kind-hearted swain,  
 Of sports where he a part had borne  
 In boyhood's blithe and cloudless morn;  
 Or pious words and spotless worth  
 Of friends who long have left the earth:  
 Or legends of the olden times,  
 And rural jests, and rustic rhymes:  
 While aye as he the story told  
 Of Scotland oft betrayed and sold,  
 With ancient grudge his wrath would glow  
 Against that "faithless Southron foe!"

31 'These lines refer to some popular superstitions, and romantic legends of this district, the most interesting of which have been commemorated in Scott's "Minstrelsy of the Border." - T. P.' In Hay, p. 79.

32 In Hay, p. 72.

The shepherd, like Wordsworth's 'Michael', is a worthy man. Pringle admires him for his piety and moral character, but also for the 'simple strain' of the 'shepherd's homelier tale', which is Pringle's preferred mode of poetic expression in 'To an Early Friend'.<sup>33</sup>

The poem concludes with the sentiment that nothing has a firmer hold on the poet's heart than the 'Scenes and Friends of Early Years' (line 584). In so doing, it places itself firmly in the neo-Augustan reflective tradition, epitomised by Campbell's *The Pleasures of Hope*, a book which Pringle himself claimed to be heavily influenced by.<sup>34</sup> Sydney Clouts says of the poem that it is 'heavily conventional in the late Augustan manner,' and 'contains none of the more engaged interest of his South African poems.'<sup>35</sup> Pringle's interest is certainly engaged with the history, folklore and scenery of his native Teviotdale, but as formative influences in his own life and on his own memories, whereas his later South African poems tend to be politically engaged. Clouts also says that 'Wordsworth's romanticism is a romanticism of vision as well as of deep and solitary feeling, while the romanticism of Pringle [...] is congenial rather than passionate.' I would agree, but add that Pringle attempts deliberately to be congenial, and is at his best when doing so. He fails when trying to imitate other authors like Wordsworth and Scott, to both of whom the poem owes a large debt,

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33 In a lengthy footnote to the 1819 edition, Pringle praises the several moral characteristics of this shepherd, but distances himself from the man when it comes to issues of class and nationalistic prejudice: 'My old friend, however, was not without the common prejudices of his rank and nation; he always spoke of the Union as the "ruination of Scotland;" and one of his deepest feelings was a determined hatred of the "Southron" of ancient times, and a sovereign contempt for those of the present. - He was, and I believe still remains, a common shepherd, like his fathers before him.' *Autumnal Excursion*, p. 138.

34 One can also compare Southey's 'The Retrospect' (1794): 'Yet still will Memory's busy eye retrace / Each little vestige of the well known place; / Each wonted haunt and scene of youthful joy, / Where merriment has cheer'd the careless boy.' (lines 62-65).

35 Clouts, p. 17.

as Clouts and Brink have noted.<sup>36</sup> The poem is an attempt to harmonise three voices - the voice of the patriot (Scott, Campbell), the solitary and visionary poet who is nature's priest (Wordsworth), and the congenial fireside poet, who is Pringle himself.<sup>37</sup> It is the latter voice which dominates the collection of his early poems which Pringle published in 1819 as *The Autumnal Excursion; or, Sketches in Teviotdale, and other poems*. A review of the 'Autumnal Excursion', April 1819, drew attention to this:

It does not, perhaps, possess many indications of those loftier endowments of imagination, invention, or passion, which form the immortalizing ingredients of poetry. But there is in it, we think, a very singular delicacy of taste and sentiment, and more remarkable, as it is evidently quite simple and unstudied. [...] there is a feeling true to nature, and to the associations of scenery and of home, that is always delightful when it seems to flow from the heart.<sup>38</sup>

Concerning Pringle's poetic preoccupations in his early work, we can see that he admires the poetry of patriotism and of deep reflection in nature, but expresses a humble preference for the, at times anodyne, poetry of sentiment and congenial domesticity. The poems are rarely engaged with contemporary society and politics, and the only example of poetry as satire is *The Institute*.

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<sup>36</sup> Clouts, pp. 48, 72. Brink, pp. 4, 17, 19.

<sup>37</sup> Influenced, especially, by Leyden's 'Scene s of Infancy'.

<sup>38</sup> Review of *The Autumnal Excursion*, in *The Edinburgh Magazine and Literary Miscellany* (April 1819), 319-323 (p. 319). The review also contrasts the sonnet to Sir Thomas Graham, which it says is 'very good' (p. 322), with a sentimental, homely poem of Pringle's, 'To a Female Relative', which it says 'is more in the author's own strain,' (p. 322).

## 2.2: Journalism (1817-1819)

This section concerns Pringle's journalism and his editorial policies before 1820.<sup>39</sup> As we shall see, Pringle's poetry becomes increasingly linked to the content of his prose writings, but in this period the links are few and far between. A characteristic of most of Pringle's output at this time, poetry and prose, is its apolitical nature.

Pringle's poetry before 1820 seems to have caused offence to nobody, either morally or politically. Pringle's apolitical stance in his journalism and editorial policies led in some degree to his difficulties as editor of the *Edinburgh Monthly Magazine* (later known as *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*).<sup>40</sup> The idea to start the magazine was his own, but William Blackwood, the publisher, desired it to be a 'Tory counterblast to the successful Whig *Edinburgh Review*.'<sup>41</sup> Pringle, a Whig, was not in fact, or 'by temperament [...] in tune with the aims of the magazine or its proprietor.'<sup>42</sup> Pringle's political leanings, as well as his 'temperament', explain the non-confrontational nature of most of the contributions published in the magazine under his editorship (April 1817-September 1817).

An excerpt from the table of contents of May 1817 will give some indication of

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39 Pringle did not comment much either on his editorial policies, or on his journalistic writings at the time. For instance, it is still unknown whether or not Pringle was editor of the liberal *Edinburgh Star* newspaper. Leitch Ritchie, his friend and first biographer, claims that he was. Ritchie is notorious for his inaccuracies, though, and Patricia Morris, who is not, says that there is no record of his involvement with the paper. (Morris, p. 65). In an undated letter (June? 1817), however, Pringle asks William Blackwood to meet him either at 17 Prince's Street, or at his own lodgings, or at the 'Star Offices' at half past nine (NLS 4726.f.20). It seems, therefore, that he had at least some connection with the paper.

40 *Blackwood's* became the most important literary review of the nineteenth century, with a circulation outdoing all competitors.

41 Pereira and Chapman, p. xiii. See also Patricia Morris, 'A Periodical Paternity Claim: Pringle v. Hogg', *English Studies in Africa*, 25 (1982), 55-58.

42 Pereira and Chapman, p. xiii. Pringle may also have felt a need to keep his political opinions to himself in Tory Edinburgh.

the non-political nature of the journal: 'On the Nature of the Office of Mareschal, Account of Mr Ruthven's improved Printing Press, Account of the Method of Engraving on Stone, Anecdote of the Highlanders in 1745, Inscription in the Church of St Hilary, [...] On the origin of Milton's Satan, Remarks on Greek Tragedy No. II.' The 'original communications' were followed in each number by an 'antiquarian repertory', original poetry, book reviews, 'literary and scientific intelligence', and a monthly register containing news, commercial reports, births, deaths, marriages and so on.

It is clear that Pringle intended the magazine not to serve as a party political platform, but to be a repository of useful and entertaining knowledge with an emphasis on literary and scientific topics, as well as a strong interest in Scottish History. In other words, his journal was to be elegant, useful, and tasteful. His major contributions to the magazine, apart from several poems later published in *The Autumnal Excursion* (1819), were the 'Antiquarian Repertory', and 'Notices concerning the Scottish Gypsies'. The 'Antiquarian Repertory' was a monthly contribution which contained extracts from Scottish archival material, with little or no editorial comment attached. These serve as an indicator of Pringle's taste for Scottish History and reflect the general enthusiasm for the subject generated by the works of Walter Scott, amongst others. Apart from this they give no further insight into Pringle's thinking at the time. The 'Notices', however, deserve more attention.<sup>43</sup>

The 'Notices' are of particular interest when compared to Pringle's later writings

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43 'Notices Concerning the Scottish Gypsies', *Edinburgh Monthly Magazine* (April 1817), 43-58 (May 1817), 154-161 (September 1817), 615-620. Walter Scott claimed, falsely, to have written all of this, but only wrote seven pages out of the twenty seven, which are all given in quotation marks. See Morris, p. 46. Scott subsequently used some of this material in his introduction to *Guy Mannering*. See A. Wood, 'A Causerie - Sir Walter Scott and the "Maga"', *Blackwood's Magazine* (July 1932) 1-15 (p. 2).

on the indigenous peoples of Southern Africa, from which he gained his reputation as a philanthropist and liberal reformer. Pringle's attitude to the gypsies here is far from sympathetic (the following opinions are all his own): they are 'in reality a race of profligate and thievish impostors' (p. 44), and 'still continue the same dark, deceitful and disorderly race as when their wandering hordes first emigrated from Egypt or from India' (p. 44), even though they had been exposed to the potentially civilising influence of four centuries of European culture. They are 'despised and degraded,' because they have not benefited from the '*moral causes*' (Pringle's emphasis) which had, for instance, 'happily changed the Border reivers into a religious and industrial people' (p. 155). Pringle offers these prejudiced views of the gypsies without any further reflection or analysis. But, his attitude towards them is also ambivalent. He shares the contradictory fascination and fear felt towards these 'Asiatic people' with many of his contemporaries who turned their attention towards the East. For instance, he writes of the 'strange, picturesque, and sometimes terrific features of the gypsy character' (p. 43). Because these characters are so intriguing, particularly in literature, Pringle claims that his motivation for writing the articles is merely 'to collect and store up [...] the *raw materials* of literature,' which others 'may afterwards work up into the dignified tissue of history or science' (p. 43). This 'history or science' is not as innocent as it seems, however, for Pringle makes it clear that this kind of anthropological<sup>44</sup> information should be used 'for the purpose of setting on foot some plan for their improvement and civilization' (p. 58). Public attention should be given to them so that they might be helped by philanthropists, like the Quakers (p. 58).

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44 Pringle does not use this term himself, of course.



Pringle does not recognise that assimilating the gypsies into European culture might make them less interesting as picturesque figures in literature. But it is unlikely that he would have been aware of the contradictory nature of his position. More importantly, the main reason for running the articles on gypsies was the fact that they were frequently used as characters in the writings of Pringle's acquaintances, Hogg and Scott, and there was public interest in tracing the 'originals' of some of Scott's characters, such as the gypsy 'Meg Merrilles' (Jean Gordon) in *Guy Mannering* - on whom Pringle concentrates in his article - and the mendicant 'Edie Ochiltree' in *The Antiquary*.<sup>45</sup>

Such topics, however, were not enough to satisfy the demands of the Edinburgh public in general, or William Blackwood in particular. Pringle, and his co-editor James Cleghorn, were struggling to make a success of their magazine - sales being much lower than they expected. Then came the break with Blackwood, which Morris summarises pithily as follows:

Cleghorn accused Blackwood of interference; Blackwood accused the editors of incompetence; Pringle accused Blackwood of malevolence; Blackwood accused Pringle of disloyalty.<sup>46</sup>

Blackwood offered to keep Pringle on as editor of a new magazine, but less than a month after Blackwood had advised Cleghorn and Pringle of his intention to discontinue the *Edinburgh Monthly Magazine*, they had already signed an agreement with Archibald Constable to edit his new, rival, Whig *Edinburgh Magazine and Literary Miscellany*. Hence, the numbers for August and September

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<sup>45</sup> See W. S. Crockett, *The Scott Originals* (London & Edinburgh: T. N. Foulis 1912).

<sup>46</sup> Morris, p. 68. For another summary of this complicated, but fascinating dispute, see Meiring, pp. 14-16.



of Blackwood's magazine were edited by Pringle at the same time that he was doing the August and September issues of Constable's.<sup>47</sup> Pringle, however, did not take the opportunity to snipe at either publication in order to generate a magazine war, or even to put his own case. Even when the new *Blackwood's Magazine* of October 1817 published the so-called 'Chaldee Manuscript', a scathing allegorical attack on Pringle, Cleghorn, Constable and many other notable Whigs in Edinburgh, Pringle summonsed Blackwood for libel, but did not carry the dispute into his own magazine.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, his new charge was run along very similar lines as the old, and he refused to engage in party or inter magazine warfare, even when the new editors of *Blackwood's* continued to bate him.<sup>49</sup> His most noticeable contributions were a few more occasional poems (mostly love poetry), and an article entitled 'Some Account of Andrew Gemmels, A Scottish Beggar, supposed to be the original of Edie Ochiltree,' which was purely

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47 A letter from Pringle to Story gives some indication of his mood at the time: 'I am supposed to be prosperous and getting forward in the world and yet I am one of the poorest men I know. I have no regularity of hours and am often out all night, and yet I am sober and given to no dissipation. I am well known to half the people in Edinburgh and might spend all my time in pleasant company if I chose, and yet have not a friend in it - at least a male friend. I am the editor of two magazines which are direct rivals. I am supposed to be a bachelor and to live in an attic four storeys high, with a cat on my mantelpiece, and yet I have a house with a street door, and though not a wife in it, one ready to take there as soon as I am able.' In Meiring, p. 16.

48 Pringle was referred to as 'the Lamb', 'Lamiter' having the additional meaning of a lame person in Scottish vernacular. Many people claimed that the 'Chaldee Manuscript' was blasphemous, but sales of Blackwood's magazine soared.

49 For instance, a letter by Timothy Tickler (John Wilson, aided on occasion by J. G. Lockhart) to the editor of *Blackwood's*, published in July 1818, implies that Constable's magazine is so boring that it is only good enough for his country minister, who quotes 'blads' of it. His wife cannot understand how 'anything so stupid should make her so angry.' Tickler goes on to mock Pringle in a series of four extended similes, two of which I will quote. 'Messrs Cleghorn and Pringle remind me of two snails that come crawling out in the calm of the evening, each clad in a complete coat of mail, and protruding a formidable pair of horns. I have seen such snails look quite chivalrous and heroic; but the instant a straw touches the said horns, in they go - and every thing wears a pacific character.' And, 'Messrs Cleghorn and Pringle remind me of two "shard-born beetles," who, "when all the air a solemn stillness holds," come swinging along "with drowsy hum," till, as it were, intentionally knocking themselves against the breast of some meditative gentleman at eventide, they fall down at his feet, crushed and bleeding to death, in the dry summer-dust.' 'Letters of Timothy Tickler to Eminent Literary Characters, Letter IV. - To the Editor of Blackwood's Magazine,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, (July 1818), 461-463 (p. 462). Other letters in this series which satirise Pringle occur in *Blackwood's*, (February 1818), 501-504, and (March 1818), 652-656.

anecdotal.<sup>50</sup>

Probably because Pringle refused to change the content and format of the magazine, Constable's magazine did not do well. Pringle was simply unwilling to engage in the rancorous inter-magazine rivalry engendered by the sarcastic but amusing style of Wilson and Lockhart in *Blackwood's* magazine, which boosted its sales, or to make his magazine more political. Pringle would have seemed hypocritical had he adopted the tactics of which he accused his opponents. Consequently, when subscriptions dropped below one thousand in March 1819, Constable dispensed with his services.<sup>51</sup> It appears, then, that before 1820 the genteel blandness of Pringle's poetry brought him little fame as a poet, and his unwillingness to use journalism as a provocative political platform led to the end of this phase of his career as a journalist.

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50 In *Edinburgh Magazine* (September 1817) 103-106. Ochiltree appeared in Scott's *The Antiquary*.

51 See a letter from Constable to Pringle, 26 February 1819, NLS 790.f.388.

### 2.3: Emigration

Pringle had few enemies for his efforts and fairness, but also no job in the literary world.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, having recently married Margaret Brown, he was severely out of pocket. A further drain on his finances was the publication of the *Autumnal Excursion*, which he published at his own expense in 1819. He made no profit from it and had only sold one hundred out of five hundred copies after nine months. Emigration seemed a viable alternative, even though, just a few months before, Pringle had written in very negative terms about this very subject:

Owing to the general and severe pressure of the distress which succeeded the late war, combined perhaps with other unfortunate causes, the tide of emigration to America from the Border districts has recently increased to a deplorable extent. Last summer about fifty individuals emigrated from the small town of Jedburgh alone; and from its immediate vicinity not fewer than seventy families, of whom many had been reduced from competent and even affluent circumstances to this melancholy resource.<sup>53</sup>

Besides viewing emigration as a sad necessity only to be taken *in extremis*, the two poems Pringle wrote before 1820 which deal with parting for a foreign land are highly conventional. 'On Parting with a Friend Going Abroad' juxtaposes a spirit of freedom and adventure with the pain of leaving friends and loved ones. 'A Long Farewell' is the song of a lover going to woo 'the heartless pride of Wealth and Fame' (line 6) in some unspecified place because he has been rejected.

As Pringle's financial situation became progressively more hopeless, he applied to lead a party of 1820 Settlers to the Cape of Good Hope, and his petition was

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52 'But I shall endeavour never to put it in the power of anyone to say that I have acted unfairly or ungenerously' Pringle to Blackwood, in Meiring, p. 15.

53 Note in *Autumnal Excursion*, p. 128.

granted. Pringle attempted to persuade his friend John Fairbairn to accompany him, but without success. He left for the Cape, in a depressed mood, to be 'unseen - unknown - unpitied.'<sup>54</sup>

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54 Pringle to Fairbairn, 28 October 1819, Brenthurst, <sup>Library, Book</sup> 4534. Pringle claims in the *Narrative* that he left Scotland with 'a decided aversion to literature, (or, at least, to Periodical Literature), as a profession.' In *Narrative*, p. 4.

### 3: South Africa (1820-1824)

Thomas Pringle's *Narrative of a Residence in South Africa*, a book which covers his experience in the colony from arrival in 1820 to departure in 1826, was finally completed in 1834, eight years after he had left the Cape. As such, it represents a retrospective analysis of his experience there, as opposed to a contemporary record. The book, for instance, presents Pringle (from the time of his arrival) as an ardent liberal Whig, a staunch anti-slavery activist, and a supporter, albeit a critical one, of Empire and the civilising mission. It is in this light that Pringle has most often been remembered and his poetry interpreted, without taking into account the development of his political thinking as evidenced by his writings. This chapter will consider Pringle's writings, from contemporary documents, during his first four years at the Cape. Firstly, however, some background information about the settlement scheme and the settlers themselves is necessary to contextualise my analysis.

### 3.1: The 1820 Settlers and the Pringle party

A group of four thousand British settlers, their passage funded by the home government, arrived at the Cape in 1820. As Noël Mostert states: 'the operation was probably the most callous act of mass settlement in the history of empire.' The settlers were 'wholly ignorant in most cases even of how to plant a potato, largely innocent of any real knowledge of the historic background of the region they occupied, and certainly ignorant of how to cope with the natural dangers of their surroundings.'<sup>1</sup> Even though Thomas Pringle was an atypical 1820 settler, in that he was the leader of the only Scottish party and that he expected to gain a government post (whereas most settlers were English farmers and artisans), he shared the difficulties suffered by all prospective settlers in gaining adequate information about the Cape before departure. Before the arrival of the 1820 settlers in the Cape, Southern Africa had occupied very little space in the imagination of either the British public or in the works of British Romantic writers. Poets who regularly directed their poetic gaze eastwards, or, to a lesser extent, westwards, like Byron, Shelley, Keats, Rogers and Southey, rarely glanced towards the tip of the African continent.<sup>2</sup> Possible explanations for this lacuna include the limited British involvement in the Cape after its re-occupation in 1806. Indeed, Pringle had not shown any indication of interest in South Africa in his poetry or journalism before his decision to emigrate. Of the travel literature written about the Cape between 1719 and 1819, nine of the eleven accounts known to Pringle by 1834 were written by non-British writers, and, where they were translated into English, had

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1 Noël Mostert, *Frontiers, The Epic of South Africa's Creation and the Tragedy of the Xhosa People* (London: Pimlico, 1993), p. 533.

2 Exceptionally, the figure of the 'Hottentot' occurs frequently in eighteenth <sup>and early nineteenth</sup> century discourse, most notoriously in terms of the 'Hottentot Venus'.

a relatively restricted circulation in Britain.<sup>3</sup> Of the two Britons, William Paterson, who is described as 'the first to write and publish in English a book entirely devoted to a description of experience at first hand of travel in South Africa' was a Scottish Linnaean 'naturalist'.<sup>4</sup> His book, *Narrative of four voyages in the land of the Hottentots and Kaffirs* (1789), despite the peoples mentioned in its title, was largely a document of South African 'geography, fauna and flora.'<sup>5</sup> The book was of more use to naturalists than prospective settlers. Similarly, the career diplomat John Barrow's *Travels into the Interior of Southern Africa in the Years 1797 and 1798* (1809) was 'a strange, highly attenuated kind of narrative that seems to do everything possible to minimize the human presence.'<sup>6</sup> They were of use to settlers who were anxious to learn about the land they were to settle, but they gave very little information about its peoples. Even missionary involvement there, which could have made Britain more aware of conditions in the sub-continent, had been minimal before 1820. The first missionary in South Africa was the Moravian George Schmidt (1737), and the first member of the London Missionary Society sent out was Dr. Vanderkemp (1798).

When the scheme to settle the Cape was announced in parliament in 1819, therefore, prospective settlers were extremely ill-informed about the territory they were about to claim for themselves.<sup>7</sup> It is true that Pringle began to read literature on the

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3 They are Thunberg, Kolb, Le Vaillant, Latrobe, Tachert, Dapper, La Croix, Lichtenstein and Sparrman.

4 Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing And Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 50.

5 Pratt, p. 51: 'Where, [Pratt asks], is everybody? The landscape is written as uninhabited, unpossessed, unhistoricized, unoccupied even by the travellers themselves.'

6 Pratt, p. 59. Pringle does not mention John Campbell's *Travels in South Africa Undertaken at the Request of the Missionary Society* (1815), Robert Semple's *Walks and Sketches* (1815), Capt. Robert Perceval's *An Account of the Cape of Good Hope* (1804), and *Gleanings in Africa*, Anon. (1805).

7 The circular issued by the Colonial Office 'made no reference to the part of the country to which the settlers would be sent, nor the particular object which the Government had in mind in aiding them to get there. To all enquiries for information on these points the Government gave evasive answers, going no further than to inform applicants that "the particular part of the Colony selected was the South-East coast of Africa".' Harold Edward Hockly, *The Story of the British Settlers of 1820 in South Africa*, 2nd edn (Cape Town: Juta, repr. 1973), p. 29.



Cape voraciously before his departure, but he may be regarded as an exception.<sup>8</sup> The bulk of the settlers set off 'with profound ignorance as to what prospects there were of successfully establishing themselves as agriculturalists in the new home awaiting them.'<sup>9</sup> Notwithstanding these problems, the settlers were generally optimistic, a view supported by the British press and a rush of positive pamphlets and accounts of the Cape printed in 1818 and 1819,<sup>10</sup> even though 'one or two newspapers sounded notes of warning and a sixteen-page booklet was issued which violently opposed the whole scheme, and although two cartoons ridiculing emigration to the Cape of 'Forlorn' Hope were published by George Cruikshank.'<sup>11</sup>

The general optimism of the settlers, however, does not imply that they were a culturally coherent group of people, originating as they did from Scotland, Ireland, Wales and England, and having widely divergent backgrounds.<sup>12</sup> Neither was there a coherent ideological approach to the colonies themselves in Britain in 1819, let alone towards Southern Africa. Christian Humanism and the 'civilising mission' were not to become the predominant ideologies of the British Empire until the Victorian period. In 1819, a time which saw the strengthening of social revolution and political reform in Britain, attitudes to colonial government in general had hardly been fixed, as is

8 Even extensive reading could be misleading, though. Pringle states as much in 1824: 'Four years ago the advantages of the Cape Colony were held forth by ignorant and interested pamphleteers to the admiration of the world, in terms equally overstrained and delusive; and 100,000 Emigrants were eager to follow where 5000 have since lamentably failed' *SACA*, 4 February, 1824, p. 34.

9 Hockly, p. 25. See also Mostert, pp. 520-521.

10 Some examples are given by Hockly in his bibliography of *Settler Africana*, Hockly, pp. 254-263.

11 Hockly, p. 25. For an examination of the Cruikshank cartoon 'The proposed Emigration to the Cape of Good Hope' see Bunn, pp. 136-137.

12 Of the 1455 adult male settlers among the group of 4000, Hockly analyses their professions as such:

Farming and country pursuits	.. 42%
Skilled artisans and mechanics	.. 32%
Commerce and Trade	.. 12%
Army, Navy and Sea	.. 5%
Professions	.. 4%
Unspecified and miscellaneous	.. 5%

Hockly, p. 31.

evidenced by rapidly changing colonial policies towards India ranging from those of minimal influence and interference within colonial society (Orientalism) to policies of complete assimilation (Anglicisation). But while British poets, philosophers and politicians continued through the first two decades of the nineteenth century to argue the often conflicting policies of Utilitarianism, Evangelism, Anglicisation and 'orientalism'<sup>13</sup> with regards to the empire in India, the roughly four thousand British emigrants who had landed at the Cape in 1820 were faced directly with the immediate problem of living in the 'contact zone' on the Cape frontier.<sup>14</sup>

As with the Pringle party, most groups of settlers, which were comprised largely of fairly uneducated parties in straitened though not desperate circumstances, knew that they had to work hard themselves in order to ensure their own survival.<sup>15</sup> They were led to believe that they were being offered a chance by the English government to re-establish themselves in a new colony solely in order to contribute to the prosperity of the settlement and to make their fortunes. Their contract with the British Government was one of land in return for labour. These men and women, unlike company or government officials who might return with ease to Britain, and who often had no direct interest in land for their own survival, had invested all their capital in the enterprise<sup>16</sup> and were, as Pringle puts it, about 'to draw an irrevocable lot for [them]selves and [their] childrens' children.'<sup>17</sup> In terms of reciprocity, settlers were

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13 Nigel Leask, *British Romantic Writers And The East: Anxieties Of Empire* (Cambridge: CUP, 1992), p. 91.

14 I use the term 'contact zone' in the sense developed by Pratt: 'The space of colonial encounters, the space in which people geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict,' Pratt, p. 6.

15 'Specific instructions were [...] issued that no settler should be allowed to own slaves or even hire Native labour, and that all work on the lands allotted was to be performed by free white labour, any contravention of these stipulations rendering the lands liable to instant forfeiture,' Hockly, p. 28.

16 Hockly, p. 28.

17 *Narrative*, p. 9.

led to believe that they were being given free land in return for their labour and industry, though this contract was practically 'irrevocable' as the vast majority of settlers did not have sufficient funds to return to Britain in the event of unexpected disaster. The circular issued to prospective settlers from Downing Street in 1819 emphasised the need for work, as well as the agricultural 'reason' for the settlement scheme. It stipulated that the head of each family be 'not infirm or incapable of work', and ended with a cursory 'P.S. In order to ensure the arrival of Settlers at the Cape at the beginning of the planting season, the Transports will not leave this country until the month of November.'<sup>18</sup> The British parliament presented the settlement scheme to the public at large in exactly the same practical and economic light, government circulars not advancing any reason for settlement besides the promised prosperity of the colonists and the benefit they would be to the colony in terms of agricultural production. What the settlers did not know when they arrived was that the British Parliament's support for the scheme 'was influenced solely by strategic and not by philanthropic or economic considerations.'<sup>19</sup> They were to be allocated land on the Cape frontier just behind the border of the so-called 'Neutral Territory', a strip of land roughly thirty miles long between the Great Fish and Keiskamma rivers which had been cleared of all inhabitants after the fifth Frontier war of 1819, when the local groups were pushed back further out of the colony than ever before. After the 'Neutral Territory', which was closed to all except the military, the settlers were to form the next line of defence. The Cape Government could no longer afford to secure the border of the colony (the Great Fish River), most troops being required in India, and the existing white population of the colony was not large enough to settle the region. The warning of the Cape Governor, Lord Charles Somerset, to the Secretary for the

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<sup>18</sup> In Hockly, p. 27.

<sup>19</sup> Hockly, p. 24.

Colonies, Earl Bathurst, that 'the settlers' property will in some measure be exposed in the first instance to be plundered by their neighbours unless their own vigilance and courage shall considerably aid in protecting it,' was not communicated to applicants for the settlement scheme.<sup>20</sup>

Misled and uninformed, most settlers arrived in the colony prepared to labour for their success, unaware that they were to be settled on the border, or that they faced a potential threat of stock theft and military action from across it. Most desired, and believed that they would be able, to establish themselves and their families as prosperous land owners in a new country.

Pringle knew that his talents were not suited to agriculture, owing in part to his lameness, but his motives for settling were likewise patriarchal and economic: 'I had two special objects in view in emigrating to the Cape. One of these was to collect again into one social circle, and establish in rural independence, my father's family.'<sup>21</sup> The other was 'to obtain, through the recommendation of powerful friends, some moderate appointment, suitable to my qualifications, in the civil service of the Colony, and probably in the newly settled district.'<sup>22</sup> It is noticeable that these aims do not concern the enlightenment, betterment, or civilisation of the local inhabitants. Understandably, Pringle's primary concerns upon arrival on the frontier were self-preservation and the success of the settlement. His letters to Walter Scott, which are amongst the few Pringle writings to survive the period 1820-1822, detail his own experiences and difficulties on the frontier, and show no concern for the condition of the natives, or for the politics of the local government.<sup>23</sup> The attitude he shows towards the 'Caffers' is

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<sup>20</sup> Hockly, p. 29.

<sup>21</sup> *Narrative*, p. 3. In a letter to Walter Scott, dated 22 September 1820, Pringle already makes it clear that he intended to get a government post, rather than remain a frontiersman, as soon as his 'duties in the interior [were] closed' NLS 867.f.43.

<sup>22</sup> *Narrative*, p. 4.

<sup>23</sup> Pringle's tone to Scott is often that of the jocular Border laird. For instance, he asks Scott 'to send us out hither, poor exiles as we are in this forlorn fag end of the universe, a set of the Scotch

hostile, engendered by the potential threat which they pose to his party, as appears in a letter to Colonel Bird of 20 September, 1821: 'Six Caffer women, supposed to be spies, were lately seized upon our grounds, but with due vigilance we trust to prevent any attempts from these marauders.'<sup>24</sup> In contrast, Pringle excuses the activities of these 'marauders' during 1820 and 1821 in the *Narrative* (1834) as follows: 'A few herds of cattle were stolen from the banks of the Great Fish River, by small parties of marauders, and in two or three instances the herdmen who guarded them were slain. That was the amount of their cupidity and bloodthirstiness; which, from men whose wives and children were starving for want of the milch cows which our commandoes had carried off, was surely not so very 'enormous' as some of the settlers have been prone to consider it.'<sup>25</sup> Pringle cannot be called a philanthropist from the evidence of his writings between 1820 and 1822.

In 1822, once Pringle had had the opportunity to observe social and political conditions in the Colony, his letter inviting John Fairbairn to join him in Cape Town, where he had just arrived to take up a post as government sub-librarian, is totally void of philanthropic sentiment:<sup>26</sup>

You must understand my good friend that having tired of herding nowt & hunting lions & Bushmen I accepted of an appointment offered me lately by the Governor [...]. The situation is quite to my wish - only the salary is rather small - & therefore to make out a more comfortable livelihood I have been induced to receive pupils [...]. In short there is a great opening here at this time for making

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Novels to recreate our spirits - for which we would thankfully make [you] such return as the country affords - such as lion & leopard skins, horns of unicorns & buffaloes, Whoos [sic] & Eland - elephant & seacow boots - Caffer and Boschman skulls - or what may perhaps be more to [your] taste, a bottle of the first wine we can make on our farm fit for a Christian gentleman to drink ' Pringle to Scott, 12 June 1821, NLS 3892.f.163.

24 Titterton Collection. Note Pringle's use of the passive 'were seized' to distance himself from responsibility for the action.

25 *Narrative*, p. 289.

26 Whereas the *Narrative* portrays Pringle moralising on the treatment of a black slave woman only one day after his arrival in Albany, pp. 15-16. I will show in the course of this dissertation how Pringle's attitudes towards the treatment of local groups and slaves developed.

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something very handsome by teaching [...] & altogether there is scope for both you and me to make our fortunes if we can seize the "time and tide." [...] I came here to mend my fortune & pay my debts.<sup>27</sup>

In this letter, Pringle makes a tasteless, anti-humanitarian joke about 'hunting lions & Bushmen' of the sort which would find no place in the *Narrative*. Life in Cape Town is described in terms of the financial advantage it might offer himself and his friend. Furthermore, possible corruption in the Government, which Pringle was to mention more and more in his journalism later, is not hinted at, possibly because he had just achieved his goal of a position in the civil service, as government sub-librarian. Pringle was not blind either to social injustice or corruption at the Cape in 1822, but his own financial comfort and security was uppermost in his mind. Certainly, dependence on the Colonial government placed a man like Pringle, inspired as he was by the Scottish Enlightenment and Romantic ideals of liberty, in an equivocal position, but it is clear from a letter to the geologist and phrenologist Sir George Mackenzie (Cape Town, 25 June 1823), that Pringle did not wish to provoke trouble for himself. The letter concerns his intended project of writing a short history of the settlement scheme, which appeared eventually as *Some Account of the Present State of the English Settlers in Albany* in late 1824.<sup>28</sup> He says: 'The fact is I perceive that it would be difficult if not impossible for me to write truly about the Colony without giving offence to those in authority on whom my success & even my subsistence is at present dependent.' He writes this letter at the time as someone who is 'so far from being an ultra in politics.'<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> FB:I:2, 24 November 1822.

<sup>28</sup> Under contract to Thomas Underwood.

<sup>29</sup> NLS, 3896.f.203.



Pringle's hesitance to 'speak the truth' about the colony at the time shows his recognition that overt expression of his views would damage his personal, financial and social standing, but also points to an ideological conflict between himself and the colonial government which had yet to be resolved. Pringle's predicament mirrored the condition which most of the settlers found themselves in, that of being dependent on the Cape Government (composed mostly of their own countrymen), yet more and more oppressed by it, as well as being culturally alienated from the existing inhabitants of the colony, Native and Boer alike.

Instead of a Same/Other dichotomy (European vs. Natives), a model often employed in the analysis of 'contact zones', settlers as a group could easily become the excluded 'that' in the power strategy of 'this, that and the other', as developed by John Barrell.<sup>30</sup> On the Cape frontier the 'this' would correspond to the hegemonic power in control, i.e. the colonial government, and the Other to the non-Europeans in the colony. Ideological strategies for survival would then involve (a combination of) various possibilities: forging an independent identity, being assimilated by or assimilating the 'this' of Colonial government, and being assimilated by or assimilating the Other of indigenous society, which included a vast range of peoples, from the beleaguered Khoi groups to the Boers.<sup>31</sup> Certainly, the easiest option for most colonists was to accept the colonial status quo (to merge with the 'this' of government) for the obvious advantages to be gained, whereas being assimilated by the Other (or 'going native') would involve ostracism from the settler community. Attempting to assimilate the Other would require the ideology of the 'civilising

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30 John Barrell, *The Infection of Thomas De Quincey: A Psychopathology of Imperialism* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1991), p. 10. As opposed to the simple Same/Other dialectic, the triadic 'this, that and the other' structure can be extended to recognise the power struggles occurring within groups that may seem to be culturally homogeneous. See also Leask, p. 87.

31 A different situation from that of the missionaries whose chief ideological motivation would be, in the heyday of Empire, to assimilate the Other into the Same.

mission' which most of the settlers did not have. In the letter to Mackenzie we see Pringle prepared to subordinate himself to the 'this' of Colonial Government, through self-imposed censorship, for his own material advantage and security. The question of the Other has not yet entered into the equation. Indeed, after three months on the frontier, Pringle views the Other merely in terms of military threat, a threat which caused him to protect the settlement, on the advice of the local authorities, with a Hottentot guard of ten men, and later with a detachment from the Cape Corps. In a letter to Walter Scott of 22 September 1820, he writes:

Before our arrival at our destination the Deputy Landdrost (an Englishman) met us & gave us possession of the soil. Observing the smallness of the party he advised me to apply for military protection at least till the arrival of more settlers, as the position we occupy is peculiarly exposed to the depredations of both Caffers & Bosjiemen, & in the meanwhile he has sent us a few armed Hottentots who have been of infinite service to us. The Governt. approved of the measure & the Hottentots will remain under my orders. We have seen some Bosjiemen on the hills & the Caffers have repeatedly carried off cattle from the Boors in our neighbourhood, but we have hitherto remained unmolested. For greater security we have erected our huts & Cattle Kraals together for the present, & we mount regular sentinels every night besides the Hottentot watch. Our vigilance & union I believe have proved our safety. When the country is better settled this insecurity will vanish to a certain extent but from the position we occupy among the desert mountains we shall never be (at least for some generations) entirely removed from the state of Borderers.<sup>32</sup>

Pringle, a Border Scot, recognised the similarities between his party's liminal condition and that of the Scottish Borders, precariously situated on the threshold of culture and nation. If the analogy of 'Borderers' is extended, then, by implication, the Pringle Party (the Borderers/Lowlanders) will never be at peace (at least for a few generations) with the 'Bosjiemen and Caffers'. In the suppressed, third part of the equation, the Edinburgh government becomes the Cape government, and the

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32 NLS, 867.f.43.

Highlanders represent the Boers, Bushmen or Xhosa. Klopper notes that 'the Pringle family were allocated land from which the Xhosa had recently been expelled. Their rural independence was thus achieved at the expense of the Xhosa, who were in an analogous position to the Scottish Highlanders who had been uprooted to make way for agrarian capitalism.'<sup>33</sup> Klopper should also have mentioned, however, that the Boers had originally displaced the Xhosa in this area. Pringle's settlement was on land confiscated from Boers involved in the Slagtersnek rebellion of 1815. Both Boers and Xhosa, therefore, occupied this position. Pringle's 'border' metaphor is based on cultural discriminations rather than on racial criteria, suggesting that, like the Borderers, the Pringle party might be able to live at peace with the Natives across the border as with the government behind them, so long as there is no 'insecurity', security being tied inextricably to financial well-being and inalienable property rights.

As Leask says of James Mill and James Macpherson,

To a radical lowland Scot like Mill, there is little difference between highlanders and Hindus. Both Mill and Macpherson, representatives of a divided Scottish culture with its own anxieties of subordination in relation to its more powerful neighbour, displace their sense of marginality and inferiority onto the Indian Other.<sup>34</sup>

Pringle, although aware by implication of a potential triadic power structure of 'this, that and the other' on the frontier, shows no indication after three months, of having decided upon whom to displace his sense of insecurity, whether on the 'Bosjiemen' or on the Cape Government. Neither group is blamed directly in the letter to Scott for placing him in the state of a Borderer.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, Pringle shows little interest in either the Cape Government, or the plight of the Caffers and Hottentots, Slaves and

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<sup>33</sup> Klopper (1990), p. 24.

<sup>34</sup> Leask, p. 87.

<sup>35</sup> My thanks to Nigel Leask for pointing out that this is the classic 'Cowboy and Indian' narrative structure.

Bushmen. His concern is for himself and his party as well as for other colonists, though his misgivings are muted so as not to cause 'offence'. When Pringle arrived in Cape Town, however, his attitude changed, as soon as he was pushed into his first publication by force of circumstance.

### 3.2: *Some Account of the Present State of the English Settlers in Albany*

In October of 1823 a series of devastating floods nearly annihilated all of the English settlers' land, housing and property. The Pringle party was unaffected owing to their geographical isolation from Albany, but the crisis provoked Pringle, as temporary secretary of the society for the 'Relief of Distressed Settlers' in Cape Town, to publish his first major piece of journalism on South Africa. Pringle had already prepared a narrative description of Albany, for publication, by 31 October 1822 - Walter Scott had suggested the idea before Pringle had departed - but had not attempted to publish it because of his desire 'to avoid publishing any thing that might clash with the views of the Government.'<sup>36</sup> The book, which consists of an introduction of fifty pages before a selection of letters by settlers who had suffered personally, was specifically designed to raise funds in England and India for the relief fund. Pringle, therefore, converted his account of Albany into a work of propaganda. The final manuscript was written in haste, then posted to Thomas Underwood on 5 January 1824. It was published shortly after it arrived in England as *Some Account of the Present State of the English Settlers in Albany, South Africa*,<sup>37</sup> and succeeded in raising an enormous sum of ten thousand pounds for the society.<sup>38</sup> Recognising the gravity of the settlers' predicament, Pringle appears to have written the document on his own initiative, for he mentions in the introduction that it is not an 'official

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36 Pringle to Scott, NLS, 3895.f.201. Pringle was already aware that he had to treat Lord Charles Somerset, the Governor, with caution. In the same letter he writes: 'Some person has informed him (or perhaps he has imagined from seeing my name mentioned much to my own upset in newspapers & magazines) that I am a violent Whig & formerly a supporter of the democrat press (as it is called) in Scotland.' He goes on to admit that he is a Whig, but denies any connection with party politics. Scott, of course, was well known for being a Tory.

37 *Some Account of the Present State of the English Settlers in Albany, South Africa* (London: Underwood, Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1824).

38 Seven thousand pounds from England and India, and three thousand from the colony itself, according to Ritchie, p. lxxxii.

statement' in his capacity as secretary of the society, but that he is 'willing, however, to incur this responsibility, rather than lose time while [his] distressed countrymen are *ready to perish*.'<sup>39</sup> Political 'responsibility' could hardly be incurred by the publication of the settlers' letters themselves, for they are straightforward accounts of the actual losses suffered by individuals and blame nothing and nobody, besides the weather, for their misfortunes. Pringle's introduction, however, attempts to give a brief sketch of the general condition of the settlers in Albany, something he was hesitant to do when he wrote to Mackenzie a year earlier, as we have seen. The chief purpose of the sketch is to reassure the British and Indian readership<sup>40</sup> that the settlers were not themselves to blame for four years of disaster, indebtedness and crop failure; indeed, that the Albany settlers were an industrious group of people who were deserving of charitable treatment.

Pringle's first concern was to point out that the ignorance of the settlers with regard to their location was not their own fault. He provides the reader with a topographical description of Albany, because it will ensure a more correct notion of it than:

can be derived from the too fanciful delineations of some late tourists. These gentlemen, whether scientific, sentimental, or religious in their other views, have almost universally concurred in representing the Zuureveld, as a fair and fertile region of unrivalled beauty and fecundity; - extending in luxuriant plains to invite the plough-share, or swelling into verdant hills, which only wanted flocks and shepherds to be quite Arcadian; - adorned, moreover, with evergreen groves and forests, and with the superb and glowing allurements of euphorbias, strelitzas [sic], chandelier aloes, and scented acacias; - its lawny solitudes enlivened by sportive herds of elegant antelopes; and the whole landscape embellished (as they usually express it) "with all the picturesque scenery of a nobleman's park in England;" but rather, as transmitted through this "pictured medium," like a landscape in fairyland (pp. 4-5).<sup>41</sup>

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39 *Albany*, p. 2.

40 A relief fund had been set up in India.

41 Pringle is, thus, already aware of three distinct modes of travel writing, i. e., 'scientific, sentimental, or religious'.

These writers, says Pringle, have written in the style of Harvey's *Meditations on a Flower Garden*.<sup>42</sup> Pringle uses the language of these 'late tourists' with its 'glowing' adjectives in order to make the point that their descriptions are false to the extent of describing a place which does not exist ('fairyland'), as well as being of no practical use to the settlers. Fanciful descriptions can, thus, have dire practical consequence.<sup>43</sup> It would have been better, Pringle continues, 'if practical information collected from the experience of even boors and Hottentots had been more carefully provided by the Government.'<sup>44</sup> Thus Pringle upbraids not only the writers for their rhetoric, but also the home Government for its lack of adequate and careful preparation. His criticism above makes it plain that more practical advantage is to be gained from the information provided by indigenous inhabitants than by the home government.<sup>45</sup> The colonists, says Pringle, 'were mistaken, many of them, doubtless, in giving credit to too flattering accounts of the character and capability of the country; but not more culpably mistaken than the Government, that partly countenanced these accounts, and sent them to colonize it upon an injudicious and ill-concerted plan' (p. 35). Here, Pringle lays the blame for the initial failure of the settlement scheme squarely at the feet of the British Parliament. Given his letter to George Mackenzie above, Pringle remains hesitant to lay any charge against the Cape Government, aware of the implications such an action might have. His only accusation is an innuendo that the conservative

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42 Pringle excludes Barrow from having written in this style, but says, nevertheless, that he disagrees with many of his sentiments, especially regarding his condemnation of the Boers. *Albany*, p. 5.

43 See Pringle's insistence on the truth with regard to 'scenery and sentiment' in his later poetry, discussed in chapter seven.

44 *Albany*, p. 5.

45 'A sort of Utopian delirium was somehow excited at that time in the public mind about South Africa, and the flowery descriptions of superficial observers seem to have intoxicated with their Circean blandishments not merely the gullible herd of uninformed emigrants, but many sober men both in and out of parliament' *Albany*, pp. 6-7.



nature of the Cape Government, as opposed to a liberal one, has compounded the problems of the settlers. As if the soil were not bad enough, says Pringle, 'yet [the settlers] might possibly, with the support of a liberal government, have retrieved, in some measure, their prosperity, by turning their attention more to pasturage'.<sup>46</sup>

Having accused the British parliament of incompetence, and the Cape Government of not being liberal (in both senses), Pringle gives examples of the settlers' thriftiness and endeavour in order to ensure that counter-accusations of laziness might not be directed against them, even though a few examples of 'the sloven, the sluggard, the drunken, and the improvident' do exist (p. 17).<sup>47</sup> A hardworking body of settlers is constructed in opposition to incompetent or mean spirited governments. Pringle does not proceed to blame the Others in South African society at the time for any disadvantages the settlers had suffered through pilfering and cattle raids. The Hottentots are 'trustworthy', even though they are 'long-oppressed' (p. 45). The slaves 'are (*and must be*) unhappy, debased, and dangerous in all countries' (p. 47 - Pringle's italics), but this is the fault of the system of slavery itself and its concomitant 'clouds of prejudice' (p. 46). As for the 'Caffers, even under the least favourable points of view, [they] are certainly an honest, humane, and civilized race, compared with the red or white [Canadian] savages' (p. 45).<sup>48</sup> Pringle, therefore, stresses the positive qualities of the Others in South Africa, and omits issues of violence relating to these groups. Pringle's purpose is to present the settlers as a coherent hardworking group by comparing them to the 'this' of government. As the prospectus of the *South African Journal*, appended to *Albany*, claims:

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46 *Albany*, p. 35. It seems likely, given Pringle's political allegiance, that Pringle means 'liberal' in the political sense as well as in the primary sense of 'generous'.

47 The thriftiest, of course, being the Scotch, who 'keeping profit and utility steadily in view, [...] allow embellishments and even accommodation to wait their leisure' *Albany*, p. 18.

48 Pringle judges the groups according to their moral behaviour, not their skin colour, which makes possible his comparison of white, Canadian settlers with 'Caffers'.

No longer a disunited, wavering, and temporary assemblage of adventurers, with our ultimate views rooted beyond the ATLANTIC, we are fast acquiring, as a community, self-respect, and home importance, in which the prosperity of every country has its foundation.<sup>49</sup>

Pringle's focus in *Albany* is ultimately on the plight of the colonists themselves, but he also pays some attention to their identity as a group, which makes *Albany* more than just a factual report. The government and the indigenous population of the Cape are mentioned only in terms of the influence they have had on the welfare of the settlers. The British and Cape governments, rather than the indigenous peoples of the Cape, are blamed more directly for the settlers' predicament, an early indication of Pringle's allegiance to the governed rather than the government.

If we compare *Albany* to Pringle's journalism in Scotland, two other important differences emerge. Firstly, *Albany* is the first time that Pringle takes a personal risk by including political criticism in his writing, even though this is muted. Secondly, it is his first piece of work to deal directly with contemporary issues, which is a new departure in his journalism. *Albany*, however, was produced rapidly with a specific aim in mind, that is, fund-raising for the settlers, and concentrates, consequently, on descriptions of the settlers' difficulties, rather than extensive analysis of them. Pringle's political criticism intensified as co-editor of the *South African Commercial Advertiser*.

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49 *Albany*, p. 117. The *South African Journal* had both commenced publication and already ceased operation, owing to Somerset's opposition, by the time this prospectus was published in *Albany*.

### 3.3: *The South African Commercial Advertiser*

*The South African Commercial Advertiser* (SACA), established by the printer George Greig, was first published on 7 January 1824. From Greig's 'Prospectus' of 20 December 1823, it is clear that the principal aim of the paper was to be a medium for business transactions and advertising, 'and any information that may tend to the advancement of *Trade and Commerce*, the Improvement of *Agriculture*, or the elucidation of *Science*.'<sup>50</sup> 'A small portion' of the paper, however, would be devoted to '*Original Miscellaneous Matters*' as well as extracts from '*English Papers*', some '*Literary Productions*', and the odd 'inoffensive Point of Humour.' All articles to be printed in the paper, however, were subject to the *caveat* that it would '*ever* most rigidly *exclude* all PERSONAL CONTROVERSY, however disguised, or the remotest discussion of Subjects relating to the *Policy or Administration of the COLONIAL GOVERNMENT*.' Lastly, it was admitted that there might not be much literary activity in the colony, but it was hoped that the SACA might provide a forum which would 'raise the Literary reputation of the Colony', and that the 'free diffusion of Knowledge' might improve society by 'elevating its Morals, and promoting a taste for Literature.' Clearly, then, the paper was launched with a social as well as a commercial agenda, though the former was subordinated to the latter.

The first two numbers, which were edited by Greig, followed this agenda very closely. Even though the prospectus claimed that the paper's principal aim was to promote trade and commerce in the whole colony, however, it soon became apparent that Greig directed the paper exclusively at the English speaking population of the Cape (except for a few advertisements in Dutch). Greig's attitude towards the

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<sup>50</sup> 'Prospectus', *South African Commercial Advertiser* (South African Library: Cape Town, repr. 1978).

indigenous inhabitants of Southern Africa, such as the warlike 'Mantatees', is simple and patronising. In an article on them they are merely called 'poor barbarians'.<sup>51</sup> Greig's editorials are unquestioningly pro-British, ignoring the Dutch, and linking the British flag to his own paper, which, as a 'herald of news' would spread the Christian message to enlighten the Heathens:

Nor can we cease to rejoice, when we perceive the British flag, which heretofore waved the signal of victory wherever it was unfurled, now displayed as the signal of Christian Charity and Benevolence; as the source of light to those who sit in darkness; - the herald of news, which we trust the Heathen and the Infidel will soon gladly receive, and duly appreciate.<sup>52</sup>

After the second number, however, Greig invited Pringle and Fairbairn to take over the editorial side of the paper.<sup>53</sup> They duly accepted and assumed control of all editorial writing.<sup>54</sup>

From the third issue, Pringle and Fairbairn fixed on a motto for the paper, a quotation from Dr. Johnson: 'The mass of every People must be barbarous where there is no PRINTING.' The social agenda of the paper, therefore, becomes primary - but this agenda includes all the inhabitants of the Cape, not just the English. In other words, by contrast with Greig's perspective, Pringle and Fairbairn seem to imply that the English and Dutch themselves stand as much chance of being 'poor barbarians' as

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51 SACA, 14 January 1824, p. 11.

52 SACA, 7 January 1824, pp. 1-2.

53 Pringle says that Greig 'found himself in want of editorial aid, and solicited us to undertake the literary management of the paper' *Narrative*, p. 181.

54 As Pringle and Fairbairn were joint editors and collaborated in writing the editorials, I assume that the opinions expressed in them reflect the attitudes of both editors, or at least were not accepted by one and wholly obnoxious to the other. A few copies of the SACA exist in which Pringle has noted the authors by hand. These show that he wrote the second editorials for the numbers of 28 January and 4 February, a note on the painter De Meillon (21 January), and a poem titled 'Speech of His Majesty King Mateebe' (21 January). See H. C. Botha, *John Fairbairn in South Africa* (Cape Town: Historical Publication Society, 1984), p. 18.

the natives, if it were not for 'printing'. The British flag alone is no longer sufficient to guarantee the continuing civilisation of the English without the support of printing.

Apart from Pringle and Fairbairn's attempts to include the Dutch in their paper, their attitudes towards the native inhabitants of South Africa differ from those of Greig. Their first editorial shows a shift in attitude from Greig's numbers towards the natives in the sense that it is more complex. On the one hand, the 'Caffres', who pose a direct threat to the settlers on the frontier, are '*ugly customers*', even though 'when they become a civilized people their partiality to colonial beef and buttons may be turned to good account.'<sup>55</sup> On the other hand, the friendly Bechuana chiefs, the "'native nobility"' of South Africa' are described in glowing terms: 'Old Teysho's calm but marked expression of intelligence and wary wisdom, will contrast finely with the graceful attitudes and open manly look of young Peclu.'<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, a marked aversion to slavery in any form is expressed, and Christian colonists involved in it are themselves described as barbarians:

Poor Hatta is now but a humble waggon-driver, since we christian (*sic*) "Mantatees" found it convenient to enthrall his nation and usurp his heritage; but he is a man of worth and principle, and will be respected in any station.<sup>57</sup>

The editors' attitudes towards the native tribes in general is not uniform - varying from wariness towards the Caffers (Amakosa), admiration for friendly groups (Bechuanas), and pity for enslaved nations like the Hottentots. Attitudes towards the 'Caffres' in particular vary according to the threat which they pose to the settlers. In

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55 SACA, 21 January 1824, p. 17.

56 *ibid.*

57 *ibid.* Compare the final couplets of the Sonnets 'The Caffer' and 'The Bushman' respectively, published three years later in *Thompson's Travels*: 'A Heathen? -Teach him, then, thy better creed, / Christian! if thou deserv'st that name indeed,' and, 'Leaves to his sons a curse, should they be friends / With the proud Christian race - "for they are fiends!".'

general, they are 'savage hordes to whom violence, robbery, murder, and every abomination are familiar,'<sup>58</sup> but they are also portrayed as having a strong social structure since their allegiance to chieftains resembles medieval European allegiances to 'liege lords', a position which would allow them societal development along European lines. Their moral codes are recognised as valuable, even though these are not Christian, as when the chief Gaika is described: 'His *moral* character is greatly below the average scale of respectability in Cafferland.'<sup>59</sup> These attributes, of course, mean that the Caffers can be Christianised easily, as the moral qualifications necessary for their civilisation are already in place; and this seems to be the major reason for reporting on various tribes in the paper. They are almost always mentioned in the context of missionary activities.

Pringle and Fairbairn's perceptions of the various indigenous groups in the paper, though more sophisticated than Greig's, are very general. They do draw distinctions between the various groups, but tend to judge the groups mostly according to their relationships with the colonists. When they are free, that is, living outside of the boundaries of the colony, they are described as savage and threatening, though ripe for societal improvement. Friendly tribes are peaceful and moral, and enslaved peoples are meek and pitiable.

As far as missionaries are concerned, their efforts are praised without exception. Pringle and Fairbairn's attitude towards the role of missionaries is, however, not naive, in the sense that they do not believe that the missionaries' only purpose is to Christianise heathen peoples. They perceive that the missionaries' efforts are important economically for the colony, and 'even in a political point of view' in that, after civilising groups, they can 'wield them as instruments to repel [the] formidable

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58 SACA, 28 January 1824, p. 25. 'Horde' has the sense of 'nomadic', rather than 'large numbers.'

59 SACA, 28 January 1824, p. 26.



swarms of ferocious savages on their way to the Colony.'<sup>60</sup> They stress, however, that the heathens should only be civilised in the spirit of 'genuine Christianity' and not something masquerading as such.<sup>61</sup>

From the third number, the paper condemns slavery unequivocally. Pringle assumes that a people's desire for liberty will eventually triumph no matter how severely they are oppressed, an attitude which implies that any system of slavery or oppression will eventually be destroyed by default. Pringle also states that the 'real nature of the relation subsisting between Masters and Slaves' is always unfair, unequal, mistrusting and hostile.<sup>62</sup> Apart from being doomed to failure, therefore, slavery is an immoral and hostile system. The paper calls directly on the 'slumbering wisdom of the British Government,' to put a decisive end to the slave question, but exactly how they should do it is not specified, except that it should be rapid and final.<sup>63</sup> Pringle and Fairbairn maintain this position throughout their editorship of the paper, and exclude all debate on the pros and cons of slavery. In this area, therefore, Pringle and Fairbairn use the paper as a propaganda weapon to enforce their own opinions on their readership, rather than as an open forum in which the diverse opinions of its readers could be aired. Pringle condemns slavery, but suggests no positive measures to end it.

Of paramount importance to Pringle and Fairbairn, however, is the paper's social agenda with regard to Briton and Boer. In her analysis of the *SACA*, Kirsten McKenzie says that its 'underlying agenda was the creation of a rational public sphere within the colonial context, out of which a distinctive middle class identity might be

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60 *SACA*, 24 March 1824, p. 91.

61 *SACA*, 3 March 1824, p. 66.

62 *SACA*, 11 February 1824, p. 40.

63 *SACA*, 14 April 1824, p. 115. Pringle was later to join the Agency committee of the Anti-Slavery Society which insisted on immediate, rather than gradual, abolition.



formed and which might allow representative government to be established at the Cape.'<sup>64</sup> By 'rational public sphere' McKenzie implies a group of men who are capable of running public affairs, and their own lives, with minimal governmental interference because they adhere to a particular set of values and social *mores*. The paradigm of a rational member of the middle class is the one to which all must conform if they are to be accepted as full citizens. As Pringle states in the SACA:

Whatever we are, whether born in the Northern or Southern hemisphere, in England, in Holland, or in Africa, if we have made Africa our home, and feel a common interest in the prosperity of the Colony, we are all Africans. If we do as we ought - we will love, respect, and promote the welfare, first of our families, friends and connections - secondly, that of the Colony we inhabit - next of the Empire of which it forms a part - and lastly of the whole human race.<sup>65</sup>

Unlike Greig, Pringle and Fairbairn constantly attempt to unite the English and Dutch residents of the Cape, but there is only a distant possibility of including black Africans (under the umbrella of the 'whole human race') in this identity. The paper remains aimed towards 'improving' the white residents of the colony, or teaching them to act as they 'ought', that is, in conformity with the values of the editors. The above quotation is more complicated than it might seem at first sight since it conflates the issues of morality - acting as 'we ought' - and national identity - 'we are all Africans'.<sup>66</sup> Being an 'African', whether British, Dutch, or of other European descent, means accepting a particular set of liberal, middle class values, as well as accepting the authority of Britain as a colonial master (note that the editors urge their readers to work for the prosperity of the 'colony', not of the 'country', and of the

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64 Kirsten McKenzie, 'The South African Commercial Advertiser and the making of middle class identity in early nineteenth-century Cape Town' (unpublished master's thesis, University of Cape Town, 1993).

65 SACA, 17 March 1824, p. 81.

66 This inclusive definition of 'Africans' does not appear in *Albany*, where Pringle was concerned solely with the plight of the settlers.

'Empire', which is British, not Dutch). Matters would be fairly simple if being an 'African' were merely a matter of circumstantial choice, and if making this choice would automatically inspire 'Africans' to behave according to certain standards as loyal British subjects. There is no evidence, however, to suggest that Pringle or Fairbairn were aware at this stage of the difficulties inherent in their position. What is evident is that they were seeking to identify or define an African identity, a complex problem as Elliott confirms:

Colonial societies, like all societies, were in constant process of defining and redefining themselves. But, as settlements and colonies that owed their existence to a distant mother country, they all found themselves trapped in the dilemma of discovering themselves to be at once the same, and yet not the same, as the country of their origin. The dilemma was made all the more acute by the fact that [...] without exception their countries of origin held them in low esteem.<sup>67</sup>

This dilemma is evident in many of the *SACA*'s editorials. Pringle and Fairbairn wish to define an inclusive English/Dutch identity, and yet to model South African society exclusively on British society:

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<sup>67</sup> J H Elliott, 'Introduction', in *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, ed. by Nicholas Canny and Anthony Pagden (Princeton, Princeton UP, 1987), pp. 3-15 (p. 9). With regard to being held in low esteem, Pringle and Fairbairn state that 'We have more than once expressed our disapprobation of the insolent and flippant tone assumed by the common herd of English Travellers, when describing the inhabitants of other countries, and especially the Colonists of North America and the Cape of Good Hope.' *SACA*, 5 May 1824, p. 145. On the other hand, the editors reinforce this prejudice when they maintain that all British colonies in America, Africa and Australasia must 'in point of active intellect, refined manners, and social happiness [...] long continue far inferior to their illustrious Parent and Protector' *SACA*, 4 February 1824, p. 34.

If life and vigor in the natural body proceed from the centre to the extremities, so in the body politic the march of improvement appears to be from the Parent country to the Colonies; and it is to Great Britain that we in this Colony should look for principles of Legislation, for models of free and enlightened Institutions, that have for their object the diffusion of moral and intellectual knowledge, and for plans for the advancement of national prosperity.<sup>68</sup>

The way to make the colony the 'same' as the parent country, apart from copying its institutions, is to cherish and cultivate the European settlers:

To establish a flourishing Colony, therefore, in the midst of savage tribes, it is not merely a requisite to transplant thither a few hundred or thousand families of civilized people, and as soon as they have taken root to abandon them to nature and themselves; but the "*Plantation*" (to adopt the obsolete but expressive phraseology of our ancestors) must be fenced and sheltered, and unremittingly watered, and weeded, and pruned, and new-grafted, - and we must "dig about it and dung it," and watch over it with unsleeping diligence, if we wish to reap any return deserving our regard or worthy of the stock it was derived from. - If we act otherwise, and neglect the duty of good husbandmen, what can we expect but that our "*Plantation*" will either pine away in sickly and dwarfish degeneracy, or, on a soil of greater fertility, shoot up in wild and wasteful luxuriance, undistinguished for any profitable quality from the native thickets around it.<sup>69</sup>

In the hope that the 'plantation' of settlers will eventually make the colony the 'same' as Britain, care is needed not only to protect it, but also to nurture it and protect it from weeds. This is because, Pringle argues, it is natural for men to sink into a state of savagery, and very difficult to raise them from a state of barbarism.<sup>70</sup> A mechanism is needed, therefore, which can be mindful of the colony's 'moral and intellectual improvement,' and this mechanism is, of course, Pringle and Fairbairn's free press.

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68 SACA, 28 January 1824, p. 27. Embedded in this comment is Pringle and Fairbairn's deep-seated mistrust of the Cape Colonial government. I shall discuss their increasingly daring criticisms of the local administration in the SACA later.

69 SACA, 4 February 1824, p. 34. It is interesting to note that Pringle's use of the archaic term 'plantation' links it in a new sense to the West Indian plantations which he was to condemn so vociferously in later years as secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society.

70 This view of human progress/decline is widespread in Scottish Enlightenment thinking.

While recognising that the colony is not all it could be, Pringle and Fairbairn are anxious to ensure that it will not appear as 'inferior.' The obvious comparison for them would be with Europe, but, the editors insist, any comparison with Europe must often be 'unfair and entirely fallacious. The tutor and tyro cannot meet on equal grounds.'<sup>71</sup> Instead, seeing that comparison with Britain would be 'unfair', they frequently compare South Africa with other colonies, in order to prove that it is 'at least equal or superior to several of its compeers.'<sup>72</sup> By way of one example, in an editorial describing a recent, devastating plague of locusts, the editors outline the ills of New South Wales, the Isle of France, West Indian Colonies, Canada and the United States, concluding as follows:

Our object is to suggest to fellow Colonists, who are so apt to expatiate on the natural disadvantages of South Africa, that other countries likewise are not exempt from evils; and that, without undervaluing our own, it is evident that those of other Colonies, for the most part, both physical and moral, are even of a nature far more unmitigated and destructive than any that we, in South Africa, have yet had the lot to experience.<sup>73</sup>

Furthermore, the editors reserve the right for South Africans themselves (the *SACA*, that is) to judge the colony, and attack the 'ill balanced misrepresentations' which the 'REMARKS, NOTES, TOURS, JOURNALS, VISITS, DESCRIPTIONS, and STATEMENTS' of travel writers exhibit:

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<sup>71</sup> *SACA*, 4 February 1824, p. 33.

<sup>72</sup> *SACA*, 4 February 1824, p. 34.

<sup>73</sup> *SACA*, 21 April 1824, p. 125.

The truth is, a country can be faithfully described by none but its own inhabitants. They alone have a due degree of interest in it. They alone know its real character; and their accounts, by showing their own dispositions and ability, let you at once into the mind and heart of the people among whom they dwell. Till books are written and printed in the Colonies, they will continue to be misrepresented, misunderstood, injured, and insulted.<sup>74</sup>

In other words, the editors refer to Britain and British standards when they wish to criticise either the colony or the policies of its colonial government, but abuse foreigners, including English writers like Barrow, for daring to judge the colony. Only (literate) local inhabitants can describe the colony faithfully. The editors assume, and want to keep exclusive, the moral authority to criticise the colony. In order to do so, Pringle and Fairbairn had to insist on the value of the freedom of the press, for, without this, the paper would neither be able to 'nurture' the colony as desired, nor protect it from injury and insult. This insistence grew in virulence as the colonial government of Lord Charles Somerset became more and more suspicious of the activities of the newspaper. Freedom of the press rapidly became the dominant topic in the paper. This was precarious, however, as insistence on the freedom of the press constituted a break from the 'Prospectus' of the newspaper which promised not to question government policy or administration. Moreover, since the freedom of the press was not guaranteed by law as a matter of government policy, calling for a free press was a highly provocative editorial policy.

An example of this provocation appears in a letter from an unknown correspondent (perhaps either Pringle or Fairbairn)<sup>75</sup> where it is argued that the 'Liberty of the Press'

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74 *SACA*, 10 March 1824, p. 72. Pringle and Fairbairn call some of these writers 'gossiping' "'take-walk-make-book" men' *SACA*, 5 May 1824, p. 145. They themselves, of course, feel free to make as many disparaging remarks about other colonies as they feel fit, without having visited them.

75 Pringle and Fairbairn often introduced topics in the paper with letters from 'anonymous' correspondents. In this case, the letter is used to justify their editorial decision to start reporting court cases. Compare, for instance, a letter signed by 'Y' (10 March 1824, p. 76), a pseudonym frequently

in reporting court cases allows the people to gain an 'intimate knowledge of the laws, customs and usages of their native land.'<sup>76</sup> This is used to justify reporting on legal proceedings, which the paper then does readily, especially when cases are brought against the government. Indeed, the extensive reportage of the 'Edwards/Somerset libel case' was a major contributing factor in the eventual censorship of the *SACA*.<sup>77</sup>

The editors maintain consistently that the 'Liberty of the Press' is an invention of the '*Spirit*' of man, and is crucial for the success and survival of 'Representative Governments - Religious Toleration - Open debates in Parliament and Courts of Law - Reports of Proceedings in these,' - in fact, all the liberal institutions that Pringle and Fairbairn held most dear.<sup>78</sup> Considering that none of these principles applied at the Cape, it is not surprising that the autocratic government of Lord Charles Somerset would take such statements as an open attack on their policies. Indeed, if Somerset was at all insecure in his position, then statements like 'Printing [means that] Truth must prevail and the mightiest must yield to it' were hardly designed to set him at ease.<sup>79</sup>

As Pringle and Fairbairn became more audacious, the government in turn began to attack their credibility by spreading rumours that they were dangerous radicals. Their response to this was humorous at first, as in this notice: 'MEDICAL ADVICE. - It is the opinion of some of the first Medical Gentleman in Town, that much chattering, tale-bearing altogether, and an overanxiety about the transmission of minute intelligence are, especially during the summer months, exceedingly injurious to the public health. We would therefore advise, that our fellow citizens should suspend their exertions in

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used by Pringle, which requests information about 'Hottentot Institutions.' The following week the first of a series of articles on 'Hottentot Institutions' duly appeared.

76 *SACA*, 11 February 1824, p. 42.

77 See Meiring, p. 90. Pringle and Fairbairn, however, provided no editorial commentary on the reports of the proceedings.

78 *SACA*, 25 February 1824, p. 56.

79 *SACA*, 3 March 1824, p. 66.



this department till about the middle of April.'<sup>80</sup> But eventually the editors had to counter these rumours by insisting bluntly on their impartiality as journalists:

With *Party Politics* we have not, nor can have here any thing to do. [Pringle and Fairbairn then say that they may have been Whigs or Tories in England.] But, as South African Colonists, and as Editors of a South African Newspaper, we disclaim the prejudices, and disown the name of EITHER. More decidedly still do we disclaim the name, and detest the principles of RADICALS, or LEVELLERS. We are led by no Party, or Personal Partialities; we acknowledge no principles but those of the British Constitution, as by Law established; and we disavow, with indignation, all opinions that in anywise tend to disunite Civil Liberty and Religious Toleration from loyalty to the Throne, and reverence to the Altar.<sup>81</sup>

Of course, the Cape administration did not allow many civil liberties, and its policy on slavery could be seen to contradict the spirit of the 'Altar'. Notwithstanding their disclaimers, Pringle and Fairbairn's attacks on the Cape Government became more and more blatant. For instance, in one of the frequent discussions on the value of the freedom of the press, statements like the following appear: 'Every one wishes that the power of the Governor to infringe on Private Liberty, as well as the influence of the Government, may be reduced as far as is consistent with public safety', and, 'not a bird durst perch upon a bush and sing, without the leave of the Colonial Government.'<sup>82</sup> Pringle and Fairbairn also quoted extensive extracts from various writers concerning 'the liberty of the press as a corrective of despotism,'<sup>83</sup> the most damaging being extracts from 'The State of the Cape of Good Hope in 1822,' by 'A Civil Servant' (W. W. Bird), in which he states that the 'Government of one [is ...] *bad in principle*.'<sup>84</sup>

80 SACA, 4 February 1824, p. 37. John Fairbairn was one of the physicians in Cape Town, the most famous being John Barry.

81 SACA, 31 March 1824, p. 98.

82 SACA, 7 April 1824, p. 104. Perhaps a punning reference to William Wilberforce Bird, the controller of customs at the Cape. See below.

83 Meiring, p. 91.

84 SACA, 21 April 1824, p. 127.



Finally, in May 1824, the Cape Administration could tolerate the paper no longer and assumed censorship of it.<sup>85</sup> Pringle and Fairbairn responded by refusing to continue publication:

HIS MAJESTY'S FISCAL having assumed the CENSORSHIP of "*The South African Commercial Advertiser*," by an Official Order, sent to the Printing Office [...] we find it our duty, as BRITISH SUBJECTS, under these circumstances, to discontinue the Publication of the said Paper *for the present* in this Colony, until we have applied for redress and direction to His Excellency the Governor, and the British Government.<sup>86</sup>

The Fiscal, Mr. D. Denysson, delivered an order to seal the presses, but not the types. Access to the types allowed Greig, Pringle and Fairbairn to publish a sheet entitled 'Facts Connected with the Stopping of the South African Commercial Advertiser', which was then distributed freely in Cape Town and caused an immediate sensation. In it, the objections of the Fiscal, apart from the assertion that the paper had departed from its original prospectus, were reported as follows:

He then mentioned some *leading remarks*, which (he said) bore upon the Administration of the Colony. He further pointed out as "*obnoxious*," all quotations which had been made from "De Lolme," "Blackstone", the "Civil Servant's" work, "Lacon," and, generally, all aspects relative to the "*Liberty of the Press*," observing - "Nobody can doubt the obvious *tendency* of these; and, as we are not men in this Colony, but merely infants," it was, in his opinion, dangerous to insert such matter (p. 4).

Pringle began to use his journalism progressively as a medium for attacking the Cape Government, and as a means of establishing a 'rational' society at the Cape which would conform to his own set of liberal principles.<sup>87</sup> This represents a radical

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85 For a full account, see Meiring, pp. 91-95.

86 SACA, 5 May 1824, p. 144.

87 Without doubt, the arrival of the Commission of Enquiry from England to investigate the grievances of the settlers must have contributed largely to Pringle and Fairbairn's increasing confidence in attacking the government.

departure from his practices as editor of Blackwood's and Constable's magazines, and shows his increasing willingness to tackle controversial issues and lay himself open to attack in the process. His emphasis, however, is on reforming society for the middle classes of the Cape to which he belonged. Furthermore, though his position is firmly in the Anti-Slavery camp, the issues of slavery and the social conditions of South Africa's black inhabitants are of secondary importance in the paper.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> I shall demonstrate in chapter four how Pringle's emphasis begins to shift.

### 3.4: *The South African Journal*

Pringle and Fairbairn's other published contribution to the establishment of a literary culture at the Cape was the *South African Journal* (SAJ), which the Home Government 'unexpectedly' approved 'provided that nothing was published "detrimental to the peace and safety of the Colony".'<sup>89</sup> Pringle and Fairbairn started putting together the first number at the same time as they took over the literary editorship of the *SACA* in January 1824. As with the *SACA*, the prospectus of the magazine stressed that in providing a 'liberal Education' in the colony ('Religion and Uprightness', together with 'Literature and Science' being the 'root and flower of a People's strength') it would promote the 'good cause of mental improvement, pure morality, and social happiness,' of society.<sup>90</sup> As with Blackwood's and Constable's magazines, the *SAJ* aimed to be a literary and scientific miscellany, but with a specifically South African interest. The first number<sup>91</sup> contained poetry, articles which could be of practical use to settlers, like 'Notes of Rust, Bengal Wheat, &c.' (pp. 23-33), some cross-colonial comparisons, like Major Bigge's report on New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land (pp. 35-49), literary criticism in the form of 'On the Writings of Wordsworth' (pp. 12-16), and general articles such as those on apparitions (pp. 62-64), and the rearing of children (pp. 65-69). Most of the contributions are not by Pringle or Fairbairn. Contributions were solicited from the public in the *SACA*.<sup>92</sup>

As in the earlier numbers of the *SACA*, there is very little direct criticism of the Cape Government, and very little attention is paid to the native groups of South Africa

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89 A. M. Lewin Robinson, 'Introduction' to *The South African Journal*, 2 vols (Cape Town: South African Library, repr. 1974).

90 Prospectus, *SAJ*, vol. 1.

91 January - February 1824, but actually published on 5 March.

92 *SACA*, 21 February 1824, p. 22.

or to its missionaries.<sup>93</sup> Its aim to create a rational, middle class public forum for whites in the Cape, becomes clear in an article 'On Literary and Scientific Societies,' (pp. 50-55) by Fairbairn.<sup>94</sup> After the inventions of printing and the liberty of the press, these institutions are of primary importance in a society (p. 50). Free thinking in these societies has contributed to 'that hitherto unknown degree of personal, civil and religious liberty, enjoyed by the mass of people in all Christian States' (p. 54).

Pringle's most substantial contribution to the first number is an article on lions (pp. 26-33), the aim of which is to amuse and caution readers with anecdotal hunting stories of this formidable beast. Most of the articles in the first issue, including the stories of lions, are continued in the second number (March-April 1824), but the tone of the *SAJ* undergoes a significant change, especially in Pringle's article on the 'Present State and Prospects of the English Emigrants in South Africa' (pp. 151-160). Pringle states that as the Commissioners of Enquiry (recently arrived to investigate conditions at the Cape) had completed their inquiry into the condition of the settlers, it had become the editors' 'duty, as Journalists, to discuss the subject candidly and deliberately' (p. 151). Pringle admits openly that the 'original scheme of settling the Zureveld has failed' (p. 153). After describing the various reasons for this, he lays the ultimate blame squarely at the feet of the Cape government, much more explicitly than he was prepared to do in *Albany*: 'and it will be found that there is not one exception to the failure of those who adhered closely to the means pointed out by Government' (p. 155). It had become his 'duty' as a journalist to speak his mind, something he was

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93 The most interesting note on this is an anecdotal record of an interview Pringle had with the Bechuana chief Teysho, which appears in the news section of the journal. I quote an extract from p. 79, which shows Pringle's desire to understand the opinions of Teysho, as well as his candid reporting: 'We asked him, whether he thought our manner of life, or that of his own country preferable. He said, each was best for those who were used to it. He saw that we were a wiser and more knowing people than the Bechuanas; - but from long habit, he preferred the customs and manner of life of his own country to ours.'

94 Pringle and Fairbairn formed a Literary and Scientific Society of their own in Cape Town on 11 July 1824, just after the operations of the *SAJ* and *SACA* had been suspended. See Meiring, p. 101.

not prepared to do only two years earlier, in a letter to Scott, when he wished to 'avoid publishing any thing that might clash with the views of the Government.'<sup>95</sup>

From *Albany* to the closure of the *SACA* and *SAJ*, in contrast with his Scottish magazines, Pringle began to use journalism increasingly as a social and political weapon. His attention was focused on the white inhabitants of the colony and its government, and, though his anti-slavery stance is evident, it is not marked.

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<sup>95</sup> Pringle to Scott, 31 October 1822, NLS 3895.f.201.

### 3.5: Poetry (1820-1824)

All of Pringle's poems published during this period were published in the *SACA* and *SAJ* between January and May of 1824. Unfortunately, however, the original manuscripts do not survive, which makes it difficult, in most cases, to know exactly how long before publication they were written, or in what way, if any, they were altered. It is impossible, therefore, to track Pringle's poetic development during these four years with certainty.<sup>96</sup> What is certain, however, is that they were all written in South Africa, and represent his earliest poetic response to the country. It is useful to view these poems as a group, in order to contrast them with later poetry.

Sidney Clouts says of Pringle's later thirty nine poems 'illustrative of South Africa' (published in 1834) that 'only five are without a suggestion or a background, a description or an action of violence; of violence or the threat of violence to man from nature or from his fellows.'<sup>97</sup> Interestingly, where violence does infrequently occur in the poems published in 1824, the level of 'violence' is low. This suggests that Pringle's emphasis shifted significantly after this date. In 'Enon' (a sonnet dated 1821, and presumably written just after Pringle's visit there), for instance, the Moravian Missionaries who had settled in Enon are described as such:

By Heaven directed - by the World reviled-  
 Amidst the Wilderness they sought a home,  
 Where beasts of prey, and men of murder roam,  
 And untam'd Nature holds her revels wild:  
 5    There, on their pious toils their MASTER smil'd,  
       And prosper'd them, unknown or scorned of men,  
       'Till in the satyr's haunt and dragon's den  
 A garden bloom'd, and savage hordes grew mild.

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<sup>96</sup> This is easier to do for the period 1824-1826 where manuscript evidence survives.

<sup>97</sup> Clouts, p. 24.

10        So, in the guilty heart when heavenly Grace  
              Enters - it ceaseth not till it uproot  
              All evil passions from each hidden cell-  
       Planting again an Eden in their place-  
              Which yields to men and angels pleasant fruit,  
              And God himself delighteth there to dwell.<sup>98</sup>

The missionaries are portrayed as being threatened by an unspecified 'World' as well as savage [untamed] nature which includes the 'men of murder' and 'savage hordes' who live in it. In this way the missionaries' condition is parallel to that of Pringle and other settlers on the frontier who were hoping to make their 'gardens' bloom (achieve financial success) and see the 'savage hordes grow mild' (ensure their personal safety). The missionaries are being held up as ideal examples of how this might be possible. Life in Enon, however, was not as tranquil as it appears in the poem. The mission station had been 'destroyed by the Caffers in the war of 1819' before being re-occupied, as Pringle admits in the notes to *African Sketches* (1834).<sup>99</sup> In the same war, the land to be occupied by the settlers had been 'invaded' by the Caffers before being 'retaken' by the government. Pringle, here, is silent about land-rights. 'Enon' suppresses any narrative either of the violence used by the Caffers to destroy the mission station, or of the worse violence of the army used to drive them, in turn, off the land. The Caffers, however, are not blamed in the poem for destroying the mission station, nor is the army blamed for destroying them. Instead the solution of 'pious toil' acceptable to God, which is not always efficacious in the world of politics, is proposed. Indeed, it is already seen to have accomplished the aim of taming Nature in an Eden away from the 'World', just as the settlers desired to do for themselves. In this portrayal, the missionaries have been allowed their autonomy

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<sup>98</sup> *SAJ*, p. 25.

<sup>99</sup> In Pereira and Chapman, p. 114.



despite the government (or the secular World), and have succeeded in assimilating the colonial Other (the savage hordes/nature).

Pringle must have been impressed by the seeming tranquillity of Enon when he visited it in 1821, but the suggestion in the poem that 'pious toil' and the grace of God alone would be sufficient to secure the missionaries' respectability in the eyes of the world, and their security against 'savages'/'nature' is clearly idealistic. The mission had been destroyed in 1819 because of its lack of defences, a chance which Pringle was not prepared to take when it came to his own settlement.<sup>100</sup> Pringle, however, attempts to efface these unpleasant possibilities in this early work. Another feature of the poem worth noting is that it is nearly impossible to locate it in Southern Africa. 'Nature' in the poem is fantastic, peopled by 'satyr[s]' and 'dragon[s]', hardly residents of either Africa or African mythology. There are no footnotes and no local references, even on a verbal level, and the 'Wilderness' remains metaphorical rather than real.

In 'Caffer Song' (1824), a poem free of any suggestion of violence besides that of hunting for a living, the persona of the 'hunter' is cast as an idealised, pastoral swain, encircled by peace and rural tranquillity.<sup>101</sup> The poem is a rendering of a Xhosa song (the original does not survive) but fits neatly into the standard contemporary trope of

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100 Pringle's plans to fortify his settlement, as detailed in the letter to Scott above, included building a small fort. He also arranged for a group of armed soldiers to guard his settlement. Certainly, by 1823, his letter to Mackenzie and his statements in *Albany* make it clear that, as a settler at least, military involvement might be necessary to ensure the settlers' survival, however dangerous that involvement might prove. Even though Pringle calls the Caffers 'humane' and 'civilized' in *Albany*, this does not imply that he did not recognise the military threat they posed to the colony in general, and the settlers in particular. He says: 'the Caffers may be effectually checked, and their predatory inroads completely repressed or prevented, by establishing a line of small posts or fortified villages along a well-chosen frontier, and communicating with each other by constant patrols.' The system would be policed by 'a native militia of *free Hottentots* with an interest in the soil.' *Albany*, p. 41.

101 In later poems, like 'Makanna's Gathering', Pringle characterises the 'Caffer' as a warrior, rather than a hunter.

the 'noble savage' where 'the Negro reveres his parents, loves his wife, and is respected by his children. In the evening he dances.'<sup>102</sup>

#### CAFFER SONG

"*Wena umfuhla linyaniza.*"

Deep in the wild-wood lies hid a green dell,  
Where fresh from the Grey Rock the bright waters swell,  
And fast by that fountain a far-spreading tree,  
Which shelters the home that is dearest to me.

5 Down by the streamlet my heifers are grazing;  
Prone o'er the clear pool the herd-boy is gazing;  
Under the shade my Ileza is singing-  
The shade of the tree where her cradle is swinging.

10 When I come from the hill as the day-light is fading,  
Though spent with the chase, and the game for my lading,  
My nerves are new-strung and my light heart is swelling  
As I gaze on that Grey Rock which towers o'er my dwelling.<sup>103</sup>

The language is that of containment and shelter, where gentle nature - as opposed to the savage nature of 'Enon' - encloses the mild and peaceful 'Caffer', certainly far from the settlers' or missionaries' experience of them by 1824. The motivation for the poem, then, is not immediately obvious. A reading which suggests that the poem was written in order to demonstrate to fellow colonists that the 'Caffer' was, in fact, harmless if left on his own in nature would seem unlikely given the state of Pringle's political thinking, as discussed in this chapter. More likely is that the poem is an example of hymn-like, pastoral wishful-thinking which effaces the violence and injustices of colonial conflict by placing the 'Caffer' in a natural utopia with no

102 Hoxie N Fairchild, *The Noble Savage* (New York: Russel and Russel, 1961), pp. 292-293. Pringle rapidly moved away from this sort of portrayal, the only other example being his 'ethnographic' poem 'The Coranna' where all the features in the quotation are evident.

103 'Ileza', according to Pringle's note, is a 'roebuck'. It is interesting to note that this poem contains the kind of celebration of the home which is found in many of Pringle's early works, except that the narrative persona is a 'Caffer'. The only features which identify it as 'African', however, are the title, inscription, and the word 'ileza'. *SAJ*, 1, 1824, p. 25.

obvious history.<sup>104</sup> It also effaces the threat of attack which was uppermost in the minds of most colonists, even though in most cases, as in Pringle's, colonists had not been in direct contact with the Caffers, seeing that the government did not allow them to keep slaves and forbade all trade between colonists and the native tribes settled across the frontier. Certainly, Pringle had had no direct contact with the Caffers by the time he left for Cape Town in 1822. Probably because his party had not been attacked, Pringle could afford to idealise the 'Caffer' unproblematically within the pastoral tradition, to view him as being contained by gentle nature, rather than by the colonists themselves and the military, which was actually the case. It is possible that Pringle had an ulterior motive to portray 'The Caffer' as mild, isolated, peaceful - essentially concerned with the well-being of his own kin - in order to allay a fear of attack from 'savage hordes'. As we have seen in the *SACA*, Pringle viewed 'peaceful' or 'friendly' 'Caffers', such as the Bechuanas, as being respectable and moral. 'The Caffer' falls into this category.

Notwithstanding the above, by 1834, Pringle had obviously recognised the extremely idealised nature of the sketch when he changed its title to 'The Brown Hunter's Song'. With this new title, which refers instead to the 'Bushmen', who had already been virtually exterminated by 1824, the poem suddenly performs another function, that of idealising a lost state of innocence. The poem becomes an attack on those who had destroyed the idealised, defenceless, peace-loving 'Brown Hunter', who in the poem, poses no threat to colonial society.

In 'Enon' and 'Caffer Song', then, though the 'savage hordes' are portrayed negatively in the first, and the 'Caffer' positively in the latter, either 'pious' or pastoral

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104 Compare Leask (1992): 'Sir Walter Scott in his historical novel *Waverley* - significantly subtitled *Sixty Years Since* - evacuated and resolved the ideological divisions of early nineteenth-century Scotland into a romantic past, thereby constructing an image of the present as serene and untroubled" (p. 88).

toil is responsible for their redemption. There is no mention of military violence, land-rights, injustice, or oppression, themes which came to dominate his later poetry. According to Pringle, the best choice for a settler would be to become prosperous through pious toil, while remaining at peace with the government and with the natives alike.

Just as missionaries and 'Caffers' receive scant attention in the *SACA* and *SAJ*, these are the only two poems of this period which pay attention to these subjects. The poems do demonstrate, however, Pringle's growing interest in poetic representations of the groups surrounding him, but his primary poetic and journalistic focus ~~was~~ still the settlers.

Pringle's most acclaimed poem, 'Afar in the Desert', and 'An Emigrant's Song' are worthy of close reading and analysis, since they are poignant poetic responses to the difficulties experienced by settlers.

By 1824, most of the settlers' complaints were directed against the colonial government. These far outweighed any grudges they may have borne against the Caffers and Bushmen, as there had been no major incident on the frontier during this period and the level of stock theft on the frontier was still fairly low. The catalogue of the settlers' grievances against the government from their arrival to 1824 was long, as Hockly details. Not only had the settlers been misinformed as to the strategic reasons behind their settlement; but they had also been misled as to the nature of the land they were to farm (with its capricious climate more suited to animal husbandry than agriculture). Moreover, the general situation deteriorated rapidly after the return of the governor, Lord Charles Somerset, from London in December 1821. Somerset set about undoing 'everything accomplished by Sir Rufane Donkin,' the settlers'

champion.<sup>105</sup> Furthermore, he enforced his policy of 'complete non-intercourse' with the natives, all trading being transacted 'solely on behalf of the Government by a military officer.'<sup>106</sup> This policy must influence our understanding of the Cape frontier as a 'contact zone'. Lack of day to day intercourse with the Caffers, at least in the beginning, would have serious implications for the <sup>settlers'</sup> understanding of Native society and culture. Because of this policy - which resulted in monopolistic and unfair trading practices - as well as years of drought and complete failure of the wheat crops owing to the disease rust, most colonist farmers found themselves trapped in a spiral of debt to the government. Furthermore, the government refused initially to increase the settlers' one hundred acre allotments in order to allow them to farm effectively. For this and several other reasons, as detailed by Hockly, the settlers rapidly became embittered as a group who could point to few tangible rewards for their labour. The possible responses to this situation - despair and nostalgia for the 'old country' (which suffuses much of settler literature), adaptation to the status quo, or radical political action - all begin to find voice in Pringle's poetry at this time, though his responses are still marked by ambivalence.

Perhaps the most striking example of Pringle's ambivalence towards the status of colonists during the first four years of settlement occurs in 'An Emigrant's Song', published in the *SAJ*:<sup>107</sup>

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105 Hockly, p. 75.

106 Hockly, p. 76.

107 *SAJ*, 1, p. 24. It should not be confused with another poem called 'An Emigrant's Song' which Pringle wrote and published in 1834.

### An Emigrants Song

By the lone Mancazana's margin grey,  
 A heart-sick Maiden sung, -  
 And mournfully poured her melting lay  
 In England's gentle tongue: -

O! lovely spreads th' Acacia grove,  
 In Amakosa's glen  
 But fairer far the home I love  
 And ne'er must see again!

5 Far away is the land where my kindred dwell,  
 And the home where my childhood grew,  
 And the scenes that of all my bliss can tell,  
 When life and love were new.

10 Here, bright are the skies - and these valleys of bloom  
 May allure the traveller's eye -  
 But all seems dressed in death-like gloom  
 To the Exile, who comes - to die!

15 Far round and round spreads the howling waste,  
 Where the wild-beast roams at will,  
 And yawning cleughs, with woods embraced,  
 Where the Savage lurks - to kill.

20 And here, would the weary pilgrim rest  
 In the wild and pathless glen -  
 He is scared by the adder's angry crest,  
 Or the growl from the lion's den.

By happy England's uplands green  
 My dreaming fancy strays; -  
 But I soon wake to weep, 'mid the desolate scene  
 That scowls on my aching gaze.

25 Oh, light - light is Poverty's lowliest state,  
 On England's peaceful strand,  
 Compared with the heart-broken Exile's fate,  
 In this wild and weary land!

O! lovely spreads th' Acacia grove,  
 In Amakosa's glen  
 But fairer far the home I love  
 And ne'er must see again!

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In Amakosa's glen  
But fairer far the home I love  
And ne'er must see again!



The tone of this poem is overwhelmingly negative and offers no hope for the future. As such, it is a lament, a fact which Pringle acknowledged when it was re-published as 'The Exile's Lament' in *African Sketches* (1834). The response of the singer to her status as an emigrant is simple despair, which would hardly be encouraging for other settlers. This is indeed a 'melancholy scene of exile and alienation' which, as Leask notes, suffuses the poetry of John Leyden (1775-1810) and Thomas Medwin (1778-1869) in India. Leask argues that the adaptation of the 'conventions of sensibility to the colonial context marks an early phase of Anglo-Indian poetry, before high romanticism.'<sup>108</sup> 'An Emigrant's Song' fits this description, but, interestingly, Pringle distances himself from it. Firstly, it is noticeable, as we have seen, that this sense of despair and exile does not appear in Pringle's journalism, which demonstrates that he was aware of having to play a constructive role in society as a journalist, even if his poetic response to the situation was at times despairing. Pringle seems to regard expressions of despair in poetry as weak or effeminate which is why the singer in 'An Emigrant's Song' is a maiden.<sup>109</sup>

Her characterisation of emigrants as 'exiles' or 'pilgrims' deserves some attention, however, as Pringle came to use these figures frequently in his subsequent poetry. As opposed to a 'pilgrim', a positive figure who seeks God in a strange place, the 'exile' is a figure who is forced to travel through and live in strange lands without any choice in the matter. It is normally associated with misery, nostalgia and woe, a figure rejected both by his/her ancestral home, as well as the Other of the host nation. In this

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108 Nigel Leask, 'Towards an Anglo-Indian poetry,' in *Writing India*, ed. by Bart Moore-Gilbert (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1996), pp. 52-85 (p. 57).

109 Pringle used a despairing female voice in the song 'I'll bid my Heart be still' (discussed in chapter two). Another example from his early writing is 'Lady Grizzel's Lament' ('Lament of the Captive Lady' in Hay, p. 135). In this poem, a Scottish woman is captured by the English King Edward. Her response to the situation is despair: 'But though the treacherous Tyrant's yoke / My Country still must bear, / A Scottish maid his power shall mock - / He cannot rule despair!' (lines 49-52). Typically, Pringle's white, female speakers are inactive in the face of disaster.

poem, the maiden identifies herself with the 'heart-broken Exile' (line 27), rather than the 'weary pilgrim' (line 17). Even though both figures are available to her as possible descriptions of emigrants, she chooses the negative one. This is weakness, or self-indulgence, and completely contrary to the spirit of 'pious toil' which Pringle advocated in 'Enon'. It is probably for this reason that he distanced himself from the authorship of the poem in an editorial comment:

The preceding Verses have been sent us by an esteemed Correspondent, and are among the most tolerable we have yet received from the English Settlements on the Eastern Frontier. But though not devoid of poetical merit, they are lamentably deficient in the more meritorious quality of manly and energetic determination. Virtue does not consist in the expression of amiable feelings, but in the active and persevering performance of arduous duties. The present calamitous situation of the Settlers may indeed excuse in some measure, (especially in a delicate female,) this despairing tone of sentiment; and we have admitted the Lines chiefly because they serve to indicate, aptly enough, the existing state of feeling among a large and estimable class of people. But this morbid tone of despondency, accords ill with the resolute and enterprising spirit of Englishmen.<sup>110</sup>

The 'editor's' comment further reveals Pringle's awareness that the notion of exile was destructive in a colonial situation when used to lament one's woes, which might explain why he does not use this figure in his journalism, or in works like *Albany* and later the *Narrative*. The 'editor' calls for 'manly and energetic determination' amongst the settlers to overcome adversity and adapt to the colonial situation, an active as opposed to a passive response. The poem, however, is unable to suggest exactly what this response should be, whether political, or that of 'pious toil'. Pringle is still coming to terms with both his material and cultural environment.

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110 *SAJ*, pp. 24-25. Pereira and Chapman point out that the suggestion that the poem was written by a woman provides a 'nicely misleading touch' Pereira and Chapman, p. 103. In later versions, Pringle changed the nationality of the maiden from English to Scottish.

poem, the maiden identifies herself with the 'heart-broken Exile' (line 27), rather than the 'weary pilgrim' (line 17). Even though both figures are available to her as possible descriptions of emigrants, she chooses the negative one. This is weakness, or self-indulgence, and completely contrary to the spirit of 'pious toil' which Pringle advocated in 'Enon'. It is probably for this reason that he distanced himself from the authorship of the poem in an editorial comment:

The preceding Verses have been sent us by an esteemed Correspondent, and are among the most tolerable we have yet received from the English Settlements on the Eastern Frontier. But though not devoid of poetical merit, they are lamentably deficient in the more meritorious quality of manly and energetic determination. Virtue does not consist in the expression of amiable feelings, but in the active and persevering performance of arduous duties. The present calamitous situation of the Settlers may indeed excuse in some measure, (especially in a delicate female,) this despairing tone of sentiment; and we have admitted the Lines chiefly because they serve to indicate, aptly enough, the existing state of feeling among a large and estimable class of people. But this morbid tone of despondency, accords ill with the resolute and enterprising spirit of Englishmen.<sup>110</sup>

The 'editor's' comment further reveals Pringle's awareness that the notion of exile was destructive in a colonial situation when used to lament one's woes, which might explain why he does not use this figure in his journalism, or in works like *Albany* and later the *Narrative*. The 'editor' calls for 'manly and energetic determination' amongst the settlers to overcome adversity and adapt to the colonial situation, an active as opposed to a passive response. The poem, however, is unable to suggest exactly what this response should be, whether political, or that of 'pious toil'. Pringle is still coming to terms with both his material and cultural environment.

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The poem, nevertheless, is neither purely nostalgic nor devoid of interest. The two couplets of the refrain portray the difficulties of a settler caught between accepting a new landscape<sup>111</sup> and not rejecting the old, of admitting the beauty of the 'Acacia grove' but still longing for a lost 'home'. Stanza three shows the colonists' fear of the unknown, of wild nature where the unnamed 'savage lurks to kill,' as we have already seen in the sonnet 'Enon'. Stanza five contains an honest admission of the fear produced by snakes and lions in the 'exile', whereas the *Narrative* portrays Pringle himself as an avid lion hunter,<sup>112</sup> and heroic destroyer of snakes:

On one of these occasions I had sent a servant girl (a bare-legged Hottentot) to bring me some article from a neighbouring hut. On returning with it, she cried out before entering the cabin - "Oh, what shall I do? A snake has twined itself around my ankles, and if I open the door he will come into the house." "Never mind," I replied: "open the door, and let him come in if he dare." She obeyed, and in glided the snake, luckily without having harmed the poor girl. I stood prepared, and instantly smote him dead; and afterwards found him to be one of the venomous sort called *nachtslang*.

People become used to these things, and even Europeans by degrees come to regard them with indifference.<sup>113</sup>

After leaving South Africa Pringle dropped stanzas two and five when the poem was published under his own name in *Ephemerides* (1828) and *African Sketches* (1834), probably because he thought that the contents of the refrain and stanza five betrayed signs of weakness and effeminacy. Significantly, the refrain of 'An Emigrant's Song' was also altered completely in *Ephemerides* and *African Sketches*, when Pringle had already left South Africa, to read:

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111 Even though the expression of this dilemma is still in 'England's gentle tongue' (line 4).

112 *Narrative*, p. 127.

113 *Narrative*, p. 151. This can be contrasted with Pringle's more honest anecdote in the *Penny Magazine*. Startled by a cobra, Pringle jumped backwards and fell 'over a steep bank into the dry stony bed of a torrent; by which [he] suffered some severe bruises.' 'Venomous Serpents', *Penny Magazine* (December 1832), 235-236 (p. 235).

*O, bonny grows the broom on Blaiklaw knowes,  
And the birk in Clifton dale;  
And green are the hills o' the milk-white ewes,  
By the briary banks o' Cayle.*

The difference, then, is that Pringle used the figure of the 'exile' in the first poem, when in South Africa, to express despair and nostalgia, but also to express the settler's divided response to the new country as opposed to the old. In the later version, however, the 'exile' becomes a vehicle for pure nostalgia, and the real feelings and fears of the 'exiles' are effaced.<sup>114</sup> In the 1824 version, along with the editorial commentary, Pringle shows himself to be aware that nostalgia and despair are not adequate responses for survival. The editorial recipe of 'manly determination' remains as vague a possible solution to the 'exile's' problems, however, as the one of 'pious toil' suggested in 'Enon', 'Caffer Song', and *Albany*. The 'editor', at least, recognises that action is required, rather than despair and nostalgia.

'Afar in the Desert', Pringle's most widely published poem, was probably written in 1823, during or after his trip overland from the frontier to Cape Town. It was published in the *SAJ*, 2, pp. 105-107. As in 'An Emigrant's Song', the narrator (this time a man) at first seeks refuge from the world in nostalgia for childhood and in recollections of his 'Native Land' (line 13), though this vision is swiftly shattered when he recognises that all is forsaken: 'All - all - now forsaken, forgotten, or gone - / And I, a lone Exile - remembered of none - / My high aims abandoned - and good acts - undone! / Aweary of all that is under the sun.'<sup>115</sup> The narrator who flees to the desert in the first verse is a person who has actually given up hope of being a patriot,

<sup>114</sup> See Pereira and Chapman, p. 104.

<sup>115</sup> *SAJ*, 2, lines 19-22. Leask (1996) notes that 'Leyden's perceptions of India are marked by constant cultural comparison with his native Scotland.' p. 59. This is also a strong feature of many of Pringle's African poems.

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who has capitulated to despair. The phrases 'my high aims abandoned - my good acts - undone!' may express Pringle's frustration with the colonial government, but the poem is too general to be certain that this was his intention. Rather, in the first stanza, the narrator flies into the desert to escape personal failure. In the second stanza, he again flies into the desert, but this time to escape the 'oppression, corruption, and strife' of the world:

Afar in the Desart I love to ride,  
 With the silent Bush-boy alone by my side: -  
 When the wild turmoil of this wearisome life,  
 With its scenes of oppression, corruption, and strife;  
 And the proud man's frown, and the base man's fear;  
 30 And the scorner's laugh, and the sufferer's tear;  
 And malice, and meanness, and falsehood, and folly,  
 Dispose me to musing and dark melancholy; -  
 When my bosom is full, and my thoughts are high,  
 And my soul is sick with the bondman's sigh -  
 Oh, then, there is freedom, and joy, and pride,  
 Afar in the Desart alone to ride!  
 There is rapture to vault on the champing steed,  
 And to bound away with the eagle's speed,  
 With the death-fraught firelock in my hand,  
 40 (The only law of the Desart land);  
 But 'tis not the innocent to destroy,  
 For I hate the huntsman's savage joy.

Here, Pringle attempts to flee from the corruption and folly of colonial society, from the economic bondage imposed on nearly all settlers, into a frontier myth similar to that of the American 'Wild West', where freedom, joy and pride is guaranteed by the gun, but at the cost of death and destruction (the 'death-fraught firelock'), a state where the silence of the Bush-boy becomes ominous.<sup>116</sup> Coleridge, who suggested in 1828 that Pringle drop lines 41-42, would not have been aware of its ideological

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<sup>116</sup> See Voss (1982), (p. 20). Voss deconstructs the silent figure of the bushboy, who is 'alone', yet by the side of Pringle. He comes to the conclusion that God, in the poem, is on the side of the firelock, but this seems to ignore Pringle's aversion to the 'huntsman's savage joy.' Dirk Kloppe says that, in this poem, 'Pringle's revolt against colonial society is [...] at best ambivalent.' Kloppe (1990), p. 43.



implications for a settler in Pringle's position, where the gun was used to kill much more than animals. Crucially, in the first version of 1824, after the second verse, both nostalgia and the lawful lawlessness of the firelock are rejected as adequate means of coping with colonial society. The poem, therefore, does not accept the despair or exile of 'An Emigrant's Song'. The desert itself, as a physical place where, we should remember, the narrator 'loves to ride', offers a sense of solitude, but nothing to relieve the eye: 'Nor rock, nor tree, nor misty mountain, / Are found - to refresh the wearied eye: / But the barren earth, and the burning sky, / And the blank horizon round and round, / Without a living sight or sound, / Tell to the heart in its pensive mood, / That this at length - is SOLITUDE!' (lines 87-92).<sup>117</sup> This is very dissimilar to the effect the desert has on Mungo Park: 'In other parts the disconsolate wanderer, wherever he turns, sees nothing around him but a vast interminable expanse of sand and sky - a gloomy and barren void, where the eye finds no particular object to rest upon, and the mind is filled with painful apprehensions of perishing with thirst. Surrounded by this dreary solitude, the traveller [...] listens with horror to the voice of the driving blast, the only sound that interrupts the awful repose of the Desert.'<sup>118</sup> Pringle uses much the same language, suggesting that he was influenced by this passage, but to very different effect. The narrator finds refuge in a high-romantic solitude, which is redeemed by God, and the flight of the exile becomes a pilgrimage:

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117 Pringle found 'Solitude' in his early poem 'Azla' - see chapter two. He deleted the final two lines above in the *African Sketches* version of 1834.

118 Mungo Park, *Travels in the Interior of Africa*, ed. by John Keay (1799; London, Folio Society, 1984), p. 84.

95     As I sit apart by the desert stone,  
        Like Elijah at Sinai's cave alone,  
        And feel like a moth in the Mighty Hand  
        That spread the heavens and heaved the land -  
        'A still small voice' comes through the wild  
        (Like a Father consoling his fretful Child),  
        Which banishes bitterness, wrath, and fear, -  
        Saying - "MAN IS DISTANT, BUT GOD IS NEAR!"

In the light of Pringle's ambivalent position and fear of the colonial government when this poem was written, it is not surprising that he does not explicitly investigate the possibility of a political solution to the colony's troubles, whether it be revolutionary or not. The voice is God's, not his own. But the potential for dissent is made plain when Pringle identifies himself with Elijah, a prophet in the wilderness to an exiled nation: Elijah, after confronting Jezebel and slaying the priests of Baal (the forces of false religion) flees into the desert for his life, but wishing to die.<sup>119</sup> God, however, urges him to return to politics<sup>120</sup> and anoint Jehu as the new king of Israel.<sup>121</sup> Furthermore, Elijah proceeds to denounce King Ahab for stealing the vineyard of Naboth after Jezebel had had Naboth killed on false grounds, an action specifically involved with rights to land.<sup>122</sup> Elijah at Sinai's cave is a threatening figure, about to resume an active political career, to reinstate the 'high aims' which have been abandoned. The figure of Elijah represents an alternative path of political action, a figure about to pick up the gauntlet, just as Pringle was becoming more and more critical of the government in his journalism.<sup>123</sup>

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119 I Kings 19. 4.

120 'Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus,' that is, the city. I Kings 19. 15.

121 I Kings 19. 16.

122 I Kings 21. 18-22.

123 'Pringle could not, at the time of writing "Afar in the Desert," have foreseen what the outcome of his increasing conflict with Somerset would be, though he does strike a prophetic note in an earlier reference in the poem to "My high aims abandoned, - my good acts undone." What is made abundantly clear, however, is that he is disillusioned with colonial society and finds solace in the solitude of the desert' Kloppe (1990), p. 40.

The poems discussed thus far in this chapter were inserted at random into the *SAJ*, and are not directly related to articles in the journal. Three other poems, however - 'The Lion and the Camelopard,' 'Verses,' and 'Speech of his Majesty King Mateebe' - have a direct relationship with specific articles or editorials in the *SACA* and *SAJ*.

'The Lion and the Camelopard' was written as a complement to Pringle's articles on lions, and was inserted after the second (*SAJ*, 2, p. 126). The poem is characterised by extreme violence, especially when Pringle describes the death of a giraffe:

30      In vain! - the thirsty sands are drinking  
           His streaming blood - his strength is sinking -  
           The Spoiler's fangs are in his veins,  
           And his sides are streaked with sanguine stains;  
           His panting breast in foam and gore  
           Is bathed: - he reels - his race is o'er!  
           He falls - and, with convulsive throe,  
           Resigns his throat to the raging foe;  
           Who revels amidst his dying moans -  
           While the wolves gather round to share his bones.

What is remarkable about this poem is its introduction of violence as a theme, which is new in Pringle's writing, even though the violence is confined to the animal kingdom. In 'Enon' and 'An Emigrant's Song' the threat of violence is lurking in the wings, but does not take centre stage. Pringle's represents the death of the giraffe as accurately as possible, but there is very little suggestion of an allegorical or moralising subtext.<sup>124</sup>

The poem 'Verses, On seeing a late packet of English Papers, the Surrender of Cadiz, and the Proscription of a Free Press in Germany and Switzerland, - by Order

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124 In the *African Sketches* version of 1834, the lion has become identified with a 'tyrant,' and the giraffe with a 'victim'. The final three lines were changed to 'The vultures, wheeling overhead, / Swoop down, to watch, in gaunt array / Till the gorged tyrant quits his prey.' By 1834, then, as Clouts says, the poem contains more of a 'suggestion of the natural as allegorical of the human order.' Clouts, p. 31.

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of the "Holy Alliance" (SAJ, 1, pp. 8-9) is in two sections. The first is a stinging attack on tyranny and despotism in contemporary Europe. The second is an intensely patriotic call to arms for Britain to free Europe from the 'Warrior Gaul', in the name of nationalism and freedom: 'No! - COURTS and CONGRESSES must yield / To NATIONS - bursting from their chain - / And, under Britain's guardian shield, / Law, Freedom, Truth, begin their reign.' (lines 81-84). As mentioned in chapter two, Pringle rarely made direct reference to contemporary events in his early writings, nor did he use his poetry as a political or propagandistic weapon. 'Verses', however, could not be further in spirit or subject matter from the homely simplicity of 'Caffer Song', or the 'simple madrigals' of the early Pringle. In his early writing we saw that Pringle was often hesitant to write patriotic poetry, but there is no indication of this in 'Verses'. Here, Pringle deliberately adopts a patriotic tone in order to engage with contemporary events concerning the freedom of the press. Furthermore, it is the first of his poems written in Africa which contains an indirect sideswipe at the colonial government in particular.<sup>125</sup> The title of the poem tells of the proscription of a free press in Germany, whereas there is no mention of the suppression of the press in the body of the poem. Within the context of the SACA and SAJ's increasingly vehement calls for the freedom of the press at the Cape, there can be no doubt that this is an indirect attack on the government.<sup>126</sup> As we have seen, Pringle's journalism became progressively more outspoken, but this is the first known instance in which he uses his poetry as an instrument for propaganda in the African context.

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125 'Afar in the Desert,' for instance, hints at the corruption of colonial life, but in a general context.

126 Indeed, the title of the poem was changed to 'Verses, On the Restoration of Despotism in Spain, in 1823,' when Pringle published it out of the colonial context - in *Ephemerides* (1828), dropping the reference to the proscription of the free press.

'Speech Of His Majesty King Mateebe' is also a call to arms, but this time supposedly in the words of an African king.<sup>127</sup> The poem is introduced as follows: 'At the opening of the Great Pietshow or Bechuana Parliament held at New Lattakoo, in the month of June last, on the invasion of the Mantatees. (Done into English, from the short-hand notes of the Hottentot HATTA, Prince Peclu's sworn interpreter, now in the Cape.)' Pringle is, thus, rendering a translation of an actual speech into poetic form, though we cannot know how much was lost or inserted in the process. In the speech, the king calls on his people to fight the Mantatees, or lose their cattle. He urges his men to fight by questioning their courage, and by mocking women. As a report of a recent political speech, the poem is appropriate in the context of a newspaper. Pringle did not republish it, which suggests that he regarded it more as a translation than an original work of his own (note that he says the speech is 'done into English,' not 'done into Verse.') Considering the above, it is likely that Pringle thought this format to be the most accurate way of rendering Mateebe's speech. However much it might seem to contain, domesticate or control the voice of the Other, as well as gently mocking it, the poem demonstrates Pringle's interest *in* giving 'voice' to the black inhabitants of South Africa in poetic form. Unlike 'Caffer Song', however, where the Caffer singer is a peaceful swain comfortably ensconced in the pastoral tradition, Mateebe is a real person, vivified in a political and heroic tradition of poetry. Within the colonial context of the Cape this move was potentially dangerous, but, as yet, Pringle does not use black voices to attack either white society or slavery. Mateebe is a 'friendly' king, who sides with the missionary Moffat, and is full of praise for the bravery of the 'Macooas' (white men).

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127 SACA, 29 January 1824, p. 19. For the text, see appendix two.



Pringle arrived at the Cape intent on making his fortune. His primary aim was the success of himself and his party, rather than the well-being of the colony's other inhabitants. After moving to Cape Town in 1822, he became gradually aware of the distress caused to the settlers by the British and Colonial governments, but was hesitant to speak out, in order to protect his own interests. Slowly, however, his concerns for the welfare of the English and Dutch inhabitants of the colony grew, and his journalism began to champion their basic rights, especially the freedom of the press, under English law.

The poems he published in 1824 are diverse in character and do not challenge the government or colonial society directly. There are signs of increasing critique, however, especially in 'Afar in the Desert'. Furthermore, Pringle shows an enlarged awareness of the role his poetry might play in that society, evidenced by his warning to readers to be wary of the despair and exile in 'An Emigrant's Song' as well as his use of 'Verses' as a deliberate, propagandistic sideswipe, though only by implication, against Somerset's attitude towards the press. It was Pringle's increasing daring as a journalist, however, that provoked the governor, Lord Charles Somerset, to censor the *SACA*. This led Pringle and Fairbairn to cease publication of the *SACA* and *SAJ*, which provoked the wrath of Somerset even further.

Apart from 'Enon,' 'An Emigrant's Song,' and 'Afar in the Desert,' the other two poems published by Pringle in the *SAJ* were 'Wedded Love' (no. 1, p. 33) and 'Sonnet' (no. 1, p. 74).<sup>128</sup> The message of 'Wedded Love' is that the bonds of love survive 'affliction,' 'Time, and Change, and Trouble.' 'Sonnet' describes a damaged oak tree with ivy twined around it as an emblem of man and wife. Then a catastrophe is predicted:

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128 Published later as 'The Emblem.'

10      Alas! it is the emblem of our fate -  
            For oh, I feel thee twined around my soul,  
            Like yon green Ivy o'er the wounded Tree -  
            And thou must leave me ere it be too late:  
            While I, in evil Fortune's hard controul,  
            Plunge down the stream of dark Adversity.

Pringle as a 'wounded Tree' knew that trouble was brewing. It seems, in this poem, that he feared he would topple, rather than weather the storm.

#### 4: South Africa (1824-1826)

The simultaneous closure of the *SACA* and *SAJ* in May 1824, after the fiscal had attempted to censor them, left Pringle and Fairbairn without an immediate mouthpiece through which to voice their socio-political ideals, their own discontent with colonial society, or even to state their own case in the dispute with the colonial government.<sup>1</sup> Pringle aired his grievances at length several years later in the *Narrative*, however, where he summarises the events surrounding the closure of the *SACA* and *SAJ* under the following headings: 'Jealousy of the Government - The Cape 'Reign of Terror' - Suppression of the Newspaper - Discontinuance of the South African Journal - Persecution of the Editors - Suppression of the Literary Society - Conduct of the Government Press - Deplorable State of Society - Ruin of the Author's Prospects.'<sup>2</sup> Pringle's attitude towards the actions of the Cape Government had obviously not mellowed with time. Pringle was forced to resign as government sub-librarian - his only guaranteed source of income. Government officials began to withdraw their children from Pringle and Fairbairn's Classical and Commercial Academy. Both men, therefore, were faced by general hostility and debt.

Fairbairn, who was not married, resolved to stay on in Cape Town to weather the storm, but Pringle, convinced that his prospects in the colony were 'blasted', decided to return to England where he considered it would be easier to gain reparations for the £1000 loss he had suffered.<sup>3</sup> With this in mind, he set off for his settlement on the

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1 William Bridekirk was given a government loan in July 1824 to buy Greig's confiscated equipment, and started the *South African Chronicle* shortly afterwards. Pringle and Fairbairn did contribute to the paper, but only under pseudonyms, and it is clear that they did not trust Bridekirk who had not supported them during their own difficulties, and who had refused to sign the petition launched by Pringle and Fairbairn for the freedom of the press (they formed the 'Committee of subscribers to the memorial for a free press', with Howson Rutherford as secretary). In a letter of 14 March 1825 (FB:I:38A), Pringle calls the *Chronicle* a 'venal tool'.

2 *Narrative*, p. xlv.

3 *Narrative*, pp. 198-199.

frontier, in order to gather information about the state of the settlers and to bid a final farewell to his relatives. After visiting the mission station called Genadendal (about two days ride from Cape Town), however, a Boer's dog caused his horse to shy. Pringle was unseated and dislocated his lame thigh in the fall. He was carried back to Genadendal where he was nursed by a Brother Stem, who applied buchu brandy to the contusion.<sup>4</sup> Pringle, in fact, had suffered a complete fracture, but this condition was misdiagnosed, which caused him to be detained there from 19 October to 1 December 1824.<sup>5</sup>

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4 Buchu Brandy was an alcoholic drink, used as a salve, which was made from a plant of the same name.

5 These dates are approximate. 'The nearest medical man was a surgeon living in a country town about thirty miles away and he was found lying drunk, as he had been for the last ten days and likely, as it was reported by those who knew him, to be in that condition for a further ten days!' Meiring, p. 106.

#### 4.1: Genadendal

There is no evidence to suggest that Pringle wrote any poetry between the demise of the *SACA* and *SAJ* in May 1824 and his ~~accident~~ at Genadendal. The unfortunate accident, however, gave Pringle the leisure and opportunity to write a large range of material, including poetry. Even though many of the pieces he wrote during this time do not survive, they are described in a series of letters to Fairbairn. The letters provide a valuable insight into the relative value Pringle attributed to his poetry, rather than his prose, at this time.

In the first of twelve letters to Fairbairn, on 20 October 1824, Pringle writes the following: 'during the last week therefore I have done little but lie on my back & compose sonnets on the most difficult Italian model to exercise my wit & ingenuity. I shall now turn myself however to more serious concerns & set about something that bears more or less on the Cause.'<sup>6</sup> Thus, Pringle implies that writing these sonnets was merely a pleasant exercise, particularly when they ~~were~~ not intended for any specific publication. Poetry is relegated to the background when there is more 'serious' work at hand. In other words, writing poetry for amusement and prose for the 'cause' are not complementary projects. Pringle either does not perceive or does not acknowledge this poetry's potential as a vehicle for propaganda.

This is not to say that poetry was unimportant for Pringle (on the contrary, Pringle was prolific during this period), but that his attitude towards it had become less reverential than appears in the period before 1820. For instance, on 23 October 1824, he despatched three sonnets 'struck of [sic] [...] at a heat as a sample of present pursuits' as a gift for the Reverend Dr. Philip, head of the London Missionary

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<sup>6</sup> FB:I:10-10A. Pringle frequently used 'coded' words in letters to Fairbairn for fear that they would be intercepted. 'The Cause' refers to their attempts to gain reparations, oust Somerset, and establish the freedom of the press at the Cape. It does not include any activities against slavery.

#### 4.1: Genadendal

There is no evidence to suggest that Pringle wrote any poetry between the demise of the *SACA* and *SAJ* in May 1824 and his ~~accident~~ at Genadendal. The unfortunate accident, however, gave Pringle the leisure and opportunity to write a large range of material, including poetry. Even though many of the pieces he wrote during this time do not survive, they are described in a series of letters to Fairbairn. The letters provide a valuable insight into the relative value Pringle attributed to his poetry, rather than his prose, at this time.

In the first of twelve letters to Fairbairn, on 20 October 1824, Pringle writes the following: 'during the last week therefore I have done little but lie on my back & compose sonnets on the most difficult Italian model to exercise my wit & ingenuity. I shall now turn myself however to more serious concerns & set about something that bears more or less on the Cause.'<sup>6</sup> Thus, Pringle implies that writing these sonnets was merely a pleasant exercise, particularly when they ~~were~~ not intended for any specific publication. Poetry is relegated to the background when there is more 'serious' work at hand. In other words, writing poetry for amusement and prose for the 'cause' are not complementary projects. Pringle either does not perceive or does not acknowledge this poetry's potential as a vehicle for propaganda.

This is not to say that poetry was unimportant for Pringle (on the contrary, Pringle was prolific during this period), but that his attitude towards it had become less reverential than appears in the period before 1820. For instance, on 23 October 1824, he despatched three sonnets 'struck of [sic] [...] at a heat as a sample of present pursuits' as a gift for the Reverend Dr. Philip, head of the London Missionary

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<sup>6</sup> FB:I:10-10A. Pringle frequently used 'coded' words in letters to Fairbairn for fear that they would be intercepted. 'The Cause' refers to their attempts to gain reparations, oust Somerset, and establish the freedom of the press at the Cape. It does not include any activities against slavery.



Society.<sup>7</sup> At this point, Pringle was an acquaintance rather than a close friend of Dr. Philip. His willingness to send poems written in haste to a mere acquaintance not only shows his confidence as a poet, but also demonstrates that he was not afraid to distribute poetry which was imperfect or not carefully considered.

One of the sonnets probably sent to Philip survives in manuscript form in the Fairbairn papers:<sup>8</sup>

Sonnet Written at Gnadenhal

In distant Europe oft I've longed to see  
 This quiet "Vale of Grace"; & list the sound  
 Of moaning brooks and mellow turtles, round  
 The patriarch Schmidt's old consecrated Tree;  
 5 To hear the heaven-ward hymns of melody  
 Rising from the sequestered burial ground;  
 To see the heathen taught - the lost sheep found -  
 The blind restored - the long-oppressed set free.  
 All this I've witnessed now; and pleasantly  
 10 The memory shall in my heart remain:  
 But closer & yet kinder ties there be  
 That bind me to this spot with sacred chain -  
 For it hath been a Sabbath home to me  
 In Sorrow's day of weariness and pain.<sup>9</sup>

As in 'Enon', this sonnet represents a mission station as an idealised haven of tranquillity, a space into which the oppression of the world cannot enter. Unlike in 'Enon', though, where the 'savage hordes grow mild', Genadendal teaches the heathen, but is also a place where the 'long-oppressed' are 'set free'. Obviously, Pringle himself felt freed from the spiritual and emotional oppression of Cape Town at Genadendal, but 'the long-oppressed' is a general term which can include all the inhabitants of the colony. In the primary sense, Pringle probably means that the

7 FB:I:12

8 The sonnet appeared in the *South African Chronicle* (30 August 1825), signed by 'S.E', as 'Sonnet written at Genadendal', and in *Ephemerides* (1828), and *African Sketches* (1834). On each occasion revisions were made.

9 FB:I:188. Undated. Pringle often uses double underscoring in his manuscripts for emphasis.

inhabitants of the Cape can be set free spiritually at the mission station, but the notion of freedom has political implications in a slave state, both for slave-owners and the government. As Mostert notes, the Cape government had a 'deep unease, shared with the Boers, about missionary loyalty, and suspicion of their disingenuous or unsettling effect, whether intentional or not, upon the inhabitants both within and outside the colony,' to which 'Lord Charles Somerset was to give [...] full expression.'<sup>10</sup> Pringle's poetic support for the missionaries can be seen, at least partly, as political support for their liberal backers, as well as for Dr. Philip. The poem reflects the liberal attitudes of this group, but does not overtly attack the anti-missionary group. This probably explains why Bridekirk allowed it to be printed in the 'non-critical'<sup>11</sup> *South African Chronicle*.

Most of the poetry written at Genadendal, however, seems to have had no particularly political object in sight. Rather, Pringle was writing experimentally, using poetry as a diversion. He writes:

Time is not at all heavy on my hands, now that I can write more easily - and if I am wakeful at night I immediately set to upon another sonnet - which I write down next morning. By this means I have made half a score of new ones of various merit - but a few of them tolerably good in my own conceit. - Besides all this I have indited several love songs to my wife - a ballad in three parts intitled "The Ostler's Tragedy" - & begun an Epic in the Spenserian Stanza, opening with an address to the Mountain Winterberg - So you will own that I have been tolerably busy - for a bed rid man - of the Epic I must own however that only a couple of stanzas are written - & most likely there will never be more of it.<sup>12</sup>

The fact that none of these actually survives (although much may have been re-written and/or incorporated into later poems) suggests that Pringle did not take much of this writing seriously, and was not driven to write them for any particular cause.

<sup>10</sup> Mostert, p. 412.

<sup>11</sup> A term taken from the newspaper's own prospectus. See Meiring, p. 107.

<sup>12</sup> FB:I:14A. 25 October 1824.

Indeed, most of the projects he embarked upon were abandoned rapidly, as he writes six days later: 'I have tired of sonnets & "The Tragedy" sticks at the close of the 2<sup>d</sup>. Act. The rest must be prophetical. It is not blank verse. I have however a Tale in prose in embrio - & a metrical Romance proceeding. Whether they will turn to any good I cannot yet forsee.'<sup>13</sup>

A noticeable exception to the seeming levity with which Pringle regarded his poetry at this period is the sonnet 'To Scotland', a copy of which he sent to Fairbairn:

To Scotland.

My Country - when I think of all I've lost  
 In leaving thee to seek a foreign home,  
 I find more cause the further that I roam  
 To mourn the hour I left thy favoured coast:  
 5      For each high privilege which is the boast  
        And birthright of thy sons, by patriots gain'd,  
        Dishonoured dies when Right and Truth are chain'd,  
        And Caitiffs rule & rage - by sordid lusts engrossed.

I may perhaps (each generous purpose cross'd)  
 10      Forget the noble aims for which I've strain'd,  
        Calmly resign the hopes I prized the most,  
        And learn Cold Cautions I have long disdain'd -  
        But my heart must be calmer - colder yet  
        When Scotland & fair Freedom I forget.<sup>14</sup>

Pringle asked Fairbairn to forward the poem to Mr. Jardine, who was working with Bridekirk, ' & ask him how it will suit the Poet's Corner in the Chronicle.' Given that it calls the members of the Cape Government 'Caitiffs', 'by sordid lusts engrossed', and that the only possible author was Pringle (as he was the only recognised Scottish poet in the country at the time) there is some humour in Pringle's request to find out

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<sup>13</sup> FB:I:16A. 31 October 1824.

<sup>14</sup> FB:I:16B. 31 October 1824.

how the poem would 'suit' the *Chronicle*, but the request is also an attempt to test Bridekirk's allegiance.<sup>15</sup>

Pringle's attack is directed mostly against the 'Caitiffs' responsible for the loss of civil liberties ('high privilege') suffered by the colonists in the Cape, who, in consequence would feel it difficult to become 'patriots', as they were in their native land. As such, the sonnet is an outspoken attack on the authorities. Yet, it also expresses Pringle's despair and his anxieties about his own morality in the colonial system. He acknowledges that he is faced with the choice of either forgetting his 'higher aims' and accommodating himself to the system of government in exchange for its favours, or of fighting it, like a Scottish patriot. If he were to oppose the colonial government, however, he would effectively become an 'exile' in his adopted country. The problem of how to become a South African 'patriot', however, is not resolved. The typography of the phrase 'I may perhaps (each generous purpose crossed)' demonstrates Pringle's extreme anxiety to reassure the reader, and also himself, that his chances of 'selling out' to corruption are unlikely. Yet, the remote and conditional sense of the word 'may' shows Pringle at his weakest. He presents himself at a cross-roads, facing the choice of a life either as a colonial subject but not as a Scottish Patriot, or as a Scottish Patriot but not a patriotic colonial subject. The fact that he risked publishing it, however, shows that Pringle's earlier reticence to criticise the government was rapidly diminishing: he could afford to be more outspoken because he had nothing to lose except, perhaps, reparation for his losses from the Commissioners of Enquiry who were currently in the Cape.

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15 The *South African Chronicle* did not publish the poem, which was first published in the *Oriental Herald*, 12 (London: January-March, 1827), p. 309.

While Pringle threw political caution to the winds in 'To Scotland', in other pieces he indulged his poetic whimsy by writing 'balderdash' (Pringle's term). These were drinking songs which he composed while convalescing at Genadendal. One of the few of these to survive in his entire oeuvre is written on the back of a letter to Fairbairn:

We had an auld hurlbarrow, hurlbarrow, hurlbarrow  
 We had an auld hurlbarrow, rumble tumble dum  
 It's lastit mair than 70 year  
 And looks a bit the waur o' wear  
 Yet it is still gude working gear  
 And worth a pretty sum.  
 .....[?] me on the hurlbarrow, hurlbarrow &c.  
 But our gudeman has taen the sturdy, hurdy gurdy, hurdy gurdy  
 Our gudeman has taen the sturdy, rumble tumble, dum  
 An set him on the auld machine  
 Wi' a wisp whereon his wame to lean  
 And pu'd a mouthpack oe'r his e'en, rumble tumble, dum.  
 We hurled him down to Doctor Gleg, Hurlbarrow, hurlbarrow &c  
 The trams were stur'd by Wat & Meg  
 While Jock held up the rotten leg, rumble tumble dum

I have not more room or time<sup>16</sup>

Pringle did not include poems like these in his collections and, therefore, is not usually associated with this kind of light, satirical verse. Two reasons for distancing himself from such material in his capacity as a published poet can be surmised from his comments to Fairbairn on the poem. He asks Fairbairn not to show it to others as 'the song is not very elegant,' and because 'Auld Scotch Songs are apt to be misunderstood by English & Irish people,' though he looks forward to singing it together with a group of friends and a flask of 'Whisky Toddy.'<sup>17</sup>

16 FB:I:24C, 7 November 1824. See also Morris, p. 246 who points out that Hurlbarrow (wheelbarrow) refers to William Wilberforce Bird, controller of customs at the Cape (1810-1835), and author of *State of the Cape of Good Hope in 1822* which Pringle had quoted approvingly in the *SACA* and *SAJ*. Another example of Pringle's doggerel is 'Infandum, Regina, fabus renovare Dollarium' which is a call for the revaluation of the Cape currency the rix dollar, 21 October 1825, FB:I:104. See also Morris, p. 215.

17 FB:I:26, 16 November 1824.

Elegance of style is linked with intellectual complexity. There is a split, therefore, between the 'elegant' writing that Pringle wished to be remembered for, and the ephemera he frequently produced, most of which is now lost because it was never collected. It is also noticeable that there are very few poems in Scots vernacular - or which contain South African dialects or languages - in Pringle's published collections. In contrast, many of his fugitive works, such as 'Speech of his Majesty King Mateebe' are peppered with local words, idioms and ideas. This implies that Pringle intended the collected poems for a cosmopolitan, English-speaking audience, who would regard 'true' poetry as being profound, rather than seeming merely topical or local. This alerts us to the importance of reading Pringle's poetry in the context of the medium or publication for which it was written, always bearing in mind the distinction between the poetry Pringle wished to be remembered by and other poems which might not be considered as substantial. It is clear, though, that Pringle considered all his poetry at this time to be less important than his 'more serious concerns'.

These 'more serious concerns' involved writing prose material bearing on 'the Cause'. This project continued to preoccupy Pringle in the months before, during, and after Genadendal. They consist mostly of reports sent to English journals, and statements and depositions sent to the Commissioners of Enquiry in Cape Town.



## 4.2: The Cause

Immediately after the closure of the *SACA* and *SAJ*, Pringle began to send letters to the *Oriental Herald* in England concerning the stoppage of the papers and Somerset's subsequent Cape 'reign of terror'. *The Oriental Herald and Colonial Review* was a monthly publication which carried articles concerning the colonies, poetry on colonial themes, and both British and colonial news reports. As its title suggests, the journal was primarily dedicated to Indian affairs, but news reports from all British colonies were included, when available, in the review section of the paper. The paper maintained a strong anti-slavery stance and did not hesitate to criticise instances of malpractice or corruption in colonial administrations. So, Pringle could be confident that he would find support from its editor, James Silk Buckingham, and he was not disappointed. The first letter he sent, which appeared in September 1824, was an almost identical version of the pamphlet 'Facts connected with the stopping of the South African Commercial Advertiser.'<sup>18</sup> This was followed by a letter describing events at the Cape related to the press dispute.<sup>19</sup> The first article also stated, about South Africa, that '[t]he character of the government of this colony has long been as bad as that of the worst-governed country under the British flag.'<sup>20</sup> Given travelling time by ship, Pringle could not have known until at least three months after sending his letters that the paper would give him such unequivocal support, yet he dispatched at least one letter a month, and news from the Cape became a regular feature in the paper.<sup>21</sup> With such a channel open to him it is important to note that Pringle did not use the opportunity to discuss slavery, inequality or racial injustice in the colony,

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18 *Oriental Herald*, 3 (September 1824), 137-142.

19 *Oriental Herald*, 3 (November 1824), 441-443.

20 *Oriental Herald*, 3 (September 1824), p. 137.

21 Pringle's letters were edited in London by the editors of the *Oriental Herald*.



themes which subsequently came to dominate his poetry and prose. Throughout 1825 his reports concentrated on the activities of the Somerset regime with regard to the press, and its persecution of himself, Fairbairn and Greig. Similarly, Pringle's depositions to the Commissioners of Enquiry were aimed at exonerating himself from charges of being a 'factitious & turbulent disturber of the Government,'<sup>22</sup> and at gaining reparation for the losses he had sustained by closing the *SACA* and *SAJ*.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, Pringle's written output during the months after the closure of the *SACA* and *SAJ*, except for a few, mostly aborted attempts at poetry at Genadendal, amounted to little more than a factual expression of his increasingly personal vendetta against Lord Charles Somerset. The following months, however, were to have a profound effect on Pringle's political views, which in turn deeply affected his poetry and other writings.

Owing to his debts, returning to England was impossible, so Pringle resolved in early 1825 to set off once again to his settlement on the frontier, where expenses would be minimal. He departed for Uitenhage by ship in February 1825. His intention was to visit as many towns and settlements as possible en route in order to gather information which could be used against Somerset, but the trip also gave him the opportunity to collect materials for the narrative which he hoped to write, and to meet the so-called 'Radicals' on the frontier and in Albany.<sup>24</sup> It appears, though, that Pringle had little faith in their political commitment, which added fuel to his determination to destroy Somerset:

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22 These words appear in an undated fragment of a letter sent to the Commissioners by Pringle, FB:I:176.

23 At this time, Pringle was about £1000 in debt. See Meiring, p. 109.

24 The 'Radicals' were a loose association of people who opposed the Somerset regime. The epithet was given to them by Somerset, but adopted by the 'group'. See Pringle to Fairbairn, FB:I:36, Uitenhage, 1 March, 1825.

They actually wish a change - but they have no enlarged plan nor specific object beyond obtaining loans & free labour from Government. It remains for us & the doughty Doctor who have born the brunt of the battle to disable and finally destroy the Hydra. If the Bogles are false or feckless let them fall without mercy. If they prove decoy ducks let them be spitted & roasted the same as wild game. No compromise nor whitewashing must be tolerated.<sup>25</sup>

This is a far cry from the Pringle of two years earlier who wished to do nothing which might alienate him from the government. His statement, however, is motivated by his personal anger against the government, rather than by a sense of philanthropy. Pringle viewed his task of collecting information as essentially political, rather than historical or literary, as evidenced by the following extract: 'I have now been with all the chiefs of the Albany "Radicals" that I care for seeing - & all that I have seen & heard corroborates my former opinions respecting the spirit & conduct of the Gov<sup>t</sup>. in respect to this district - but most unfortunately no one has kept notes & there is a woful want of documents. However I shall collect "facts" enough for my purpose, on all the principal points.'<sup>26</sup>

Even though Pringle's commitment to fighting for this 'cause' was firm, it appears that the task oppressed him emotionally. As he writes a week later, 'I am quite sick of Grahams Town & wish I were again "afar in the Desert",'<sup>27</sup> that is, escaping from the 'turmoil of this wearisome life, / with its scenes of oppression, corruption, and

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25 FB:I:44A, Grahamstown, 5 April 1825. The 'Doctor' is Dr. John Philip. The 'Bogles' are the Commissioners of Enquiry. In an article written by Pringle called 'Border Sketches' for the *Edinburgh Magazine*, October 1817, he had said that a 'bogle' was a creature said 'to take the appearance of an ancient man, wild, withered, dwarfish, and deformed; that it played a number of malicious tricks to such as gave offence to it' p. 238.

26 FB:I:42, Grahamstown, 28 March 1825. The quotation marks around 'facts' indicate that the word is meant in the sense of 'evil deeds'. Margaret Pringle seems to have been as informed as Thomas regarding the colony. In a letter of 20 February 1826, the settler Thomas Philipps says to his sister Catherine 'you will find the Pringles very honest plain Scotch people, she can give you more information than any one as to the state of the Cape' Philipps, *Philipps, 1820 Settler, His Letters*, ed. by Arthur Keppel-Jones (Pietermaritzburg: Shuter & Shooter, 1960), p. 300.

27 FB:I:44B, Grahamstown, 5 April 1825.

strife'.<sup>28</sup> After writing this, Pringle returned to his settlement of the frontier. In his letters we can see that his determination remains strong, but the scope of his cause begins to broaden:

In a matter on which my heart is set I am not very easily discouraged by difficulties. In this cause I am now too deeply embarked to recoil under any contingency. If we could get all home together - you, the Dr. myself, we could I think make a prodigious impression on the public through the press next session of parliament. But if we cannot all effect that let us make all the preparations we can in the meanwhile - for then will be the tug of war - & we must conquer or perish. We have not the cause of this wretched Colony to stand out for - but the general cause of liberty - of humanity - of mankind. We shall probably gain little "worlds gear"[?] in the strife - but we shall gain something far more valuable - the esteem of all good men - & the approbation of our own consciences.<sup>29</sup>

Here Pringle has begun to recognise that fighting merely for his own 'cause' might not be as noble as it once seemed, especially when not supported by general philanthropic principles, but exactly how he would fight for 'liberty' and 'humanity' is not mentioned. It is possible that Pringle turns to the more general theme of government oppression (left undefined and vague) in order to give his own grievance against Somerset more justification and weight, but his desire to fight for the 'general cause of liberty - of humanity - of mankind' shows the beginnings of a broad (though undirected) philanthropic stance. Rather than being determined, it appears that Pringle was prone to despair and had little faith in himself or his own abilities as either a reformer or a poet during these months on the frontier. When he writes poetry, he calls it indulging in the "profane & profitless art of Poem-making", and the poems he sends to Fairbairn often display his depression.<sup>30</sup> In a sonnet called 'Nameless Spring', for instance, a mountain stream flows into the desert, in imitation of Pringle's

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<sup>28</sup> Lines 27-28, in Pereira and Chapman, p. 9.

<sup>29</sup> FB:I:48B-C, Eildon, 20 May 1825.

<sup>30</sup> FB:I:52, Bavians River, 29 June 1825.

projected fate: 'But that bright bourne its current ne'er shall reach: / It meets the thirsty Desert - and is gone / To waste oblivion! Let its story teach / The fate of one - who sinks, like it, unknown'.<sup>31</sup> Pringle was not to 'sink unknown', however, and even though he was depressed, his commitment to fighting oppression was growing. On 22 July 1825 he travelled to the settlement called Somerset to meet the Rev. Dr. Philip, a known campaigner for the rights of natives. At Somerset he was moved to write the following sonnet in a letter to Fairbairn, even before he had met Philip:

Sonnet to Oppression

Oppression! I have seen thee face to face, -  
And met thy cruel eye and cloudy brow;  
Which ere I saw I feared - but fear not now;  
For dread to prouder[?] feelings doth give place  
5 Of deep abhorrence. Scorning the disgrace  
Of slavish knees that near thy footstool bow,  
I also kneel - but with far other vow  
Do hail thee & thy herd of hirelings base.  
I swear, while life blood warms my throbbing veins,  
10 Still to oppose & thwart, with heart & hand  
Thy brutalizing sway - till Afric's chains  
Are burst, and Freedom rules the rescued land,  
Trampling Oppression & his iron rod.  
Such is the oath I swear: So help me God!<sup>32</sup>

As with 'My Country' and 'Nameless Spring', this sonnet is extremely self-reflexive, but the new determination to fight oppression bears no relation to the despairing resignation of the latter, or the fearful doubts of the former. This poem marks Pringle's recognition that what kept him from fighting earlier was his own sense of fear.<sup>33</sup> It should not be read as an indication of Pringle's commitment to the anti-slavery campaign, however, as there is little doubt that 'Oppression' is a

31 Lines 9-14, in Pereira and Chapman, p. 73. The poem was first published in the *Oriental Herald* (January-March 1827), as 'The Nameless Stream'.

32 FB:I:54B, Somerset, 22 July 1825.

33 Line 2, 'Which ere I saw I feared - but fear not now;' was changed to 'But thy soul-withering glance I fear not now;' when published in *African Sketches* (1834).

personification of Somerset and his regime. The reference to 'Afric's chains' (line 11) does include slaves, but also all who were not free, such as indentured labourers and the colonists themselves. Meiring claims that Pringle's meeting with Dr. John Philip, Andries Stockenstrom, Wright and Reade at Graaff Reinet (a few days after writing this sonnet) 'greatly influenced Thomas and his future' as far as anti-slavery was concerned.<sup>34</sup> Mostert says that 'for Pringle that contentious week was decisive,' as well as 'the test of his principles on the question of the Bushman commando.'<sup>35</sup> There can be no doubt that Pringle was impressed by Philip and Stockenstrom in particular, but his decision to champion their philanthropic ideals with regard to slavery and the native inhabitants of South Africa was not as rapid as Meiring suggests. This is clear in a letter from Pringle to Fairbairn in which he also highlights the tensions within himself between his roles as 'activist' and 'poet':

Your encomiums on my late rhyming attempts are very flattering - for to own the truth I have always cherished at the bottom of my heart the ambition of writing some day or other a little volume of poetry worthy of being preserved. A very small portion of what I have yet written is in my own sincere opinion of that description. But some "fair future day" I still hope to write something that may not dishonour Scotland. At present however I almost feel criminal in giving up any portion of my heart or time to poetry. I am sensible of the vast importance of the task I have undertaken - & I will not flinch from it. Yet the demon of procrastination often gets the better of me. I am not yet fairly warmed to the work, & I fly to versifying like a man with an evil conscience who flies to drink to drown remorse. But I mean to reform now. I am come over here with D<sup>r</sup>. Philip & am awakened from my lethargy by the edifying example he exhibits of indomitable pertinacity. His head his heart & whole soul are engrossed by his great & glorious task - I see he is the good servant improving his ten talents while I am hiding my own in the earth. I don't know exactly what you are doing but I know you as too like myself in indolence & fear you are also folding your hands. - But it is high time to awake.<sup>36</sup>

34 Meiring, p. 116. Klopper (1990) notes that 'most of Pringle's South African poems were written after the meeting of June 1825 and several of the poems [...] seem to have been inspired directly by the meeting,' p. 48.

35 Mostert, p. 585. I shall explore the question of the Bushman commando below, and at length in chapter 6.2.

36 FB:I:56, Graaff Reinet, 5 August 1825.

Pringle praises Philip's 'great & glorious task', that is, working as a philanthropist and missionary, but stresses that his own task - fighting for the freedom of the press and the (British) population of the Cape - is not the same as Philip's, as he often reiterates in his letters.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, Pringle viewed his responsibility as related to vindicating himself and damning Somerset and his regime: 'I can write. I can tell the parliament & public of Britain the state of things here. I can record the history of Lord Charles Somersets late administration. All this may do little for the Colony & less for myself - but I do not see that I can employ a year or two of my life better - and I am sure of ultimate success.'<sup>38</sup>

As far as the tensions between Pringle as 'activist' and Pringle as 'poet' are concerned, it is clear that he did not connect the production of poetry with his political activities. In his mind, he was still a Scottish poet, rather than an anti-slavery or anti-oppression poet. The type of poetry he was writing did not qualify him yet, he thought, to be considered as a worthy Scottish poet. It was self-referential, not worthy of being 'preserved' in the canon. Furthermore, it did no real good: poetry, like alcohol, was a salve for his own conscience, rather than an antiseptic to be applied to society's wounds.

Even though Pringle had not worked out yet how to solve this problem, a change is noticeable in his writings after his meeting with Philip and Stockenström. It can be seen from his letters, as well, that his travels on the frontier had made him increasingly aware of the injustices committed against the natives, as well as the settlers. On 4 September 1825 he began to compose a 'seven years' history of the frontier for the

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37 'It is true I cannot remain long as I am. I must make some bold push to emerge from debt & exile. But what can I do in this colony at present? Any immediate attempt w<sup>d</sup>. only sink me deeper in ruin. I must therefore wait patiently & do the best I can for the public & myself with my pen in the meanwhile. While L<sup>d</sup>. C. reigns I must remain,' FB:I:62F-G, Graaff Reinet, 12 August 1825.

38 FB:I:62J-K, Graaff Reinet, 12 August 1825.



Commissioners of Enquiry, and 'after them for the public.'<sup>39</sup> In line with this broadening of interests, he also started to write articles on the Bushmen and Gricquas for the newly rehabilitated SACA.<sup>40</sup> Linked to the material on Bushmen is a poem 'Bushman Song' which exemplifies a new spirit of defiance:<sup>41</sup>

#### Bushman Song

Let Boors & Gricquas boast their flocks,  
And cultured bounteous fields of grain;  
My home is mid the mountain rocks,  
The Desert my domain:  
5 I plant no herbs nor pleasant fruits,  
I toil not for my cheer;  
The Desert yields me juicy roots,  
And herds of bounding deer. [...]

The crested adder honoureth me,  
And yields at my command  
His poison-bag, like the honey-bee,  
20 When I seize him on the sand.  
Yea even the locusts wasteful swarm  
Which nations wail & dread,  
To me bring joy instead of harm -  
For I make of them my bread.

Thus I am lord of the Desert Land  
And I will not leave my bounds,  
To crouch beneath the Christian's hand,  
And kennel with his hounds:  
To be a hound, and watch the flocks,  
30 For the cruel White Man's gain-  
No! the brown Serpent of the Rocks  
His den doth yet retain;  
And none who there his sting provokes,  
Shall find its poison vain!<sup>42</sup>

39 FB:I:78, Milk River.

40 George Greig had returned from England in August 1825 with permission from Lord Bathurst to recommence this paper. Pringle and Fairbairn were asked to resume editorship, but Pringle could not leave the frontier for financial reasons. Fairbairn became editor of the paper at the end of the year. Thus, temporarily, part of Greig, Pringle and Fairbairn's objectives had been achieved.

41 See FB:I:78, Milk River, 4 September 1825. Voss (1982) gives an insightful reading of the contradictory position Pringle found himself in with regard to the Bushmen in terms of his Christian imperialism versus his theories of society, and knowledge that the Bushmen had been displaced from their land, pp. 15-28. See also Voss, 'The Image of the Bushman in South African English Writing of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', *English in Africa*, 14 (1987), 21-40.

42 Compare Pereira and Chapman, p. 11. The poem was first published in the SACA on 21 September 1825. Voss (1982) neatly points out the contradictions inherent in this poem. Pringle,



This is the first extant occasion on which Pringle allows a native character to voice his anger against encroachment on his land, and against slavery. In 'Caffer Song', arguably Pringle's first poem with a native speaker (written at least 21 months earlier), the protagonist is a gentle pastoral swain returning from the hunt to the arms of his lover. The 'Bushman', however, has become lord of a hostile territory which he himself has tamed, and is prepared to defend with his 'sting' (poisoned arrows).<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, there is no indication in the poem that the 'Bushman' should 'grow mild' under the influence of missionaries, as in the sonnet 'Enon'. Rather, the poem constructs him as a biblical patriarch 'afar in the desert' in an inverted world where the 'Serpent' has become a symbol of good, and the 'Christian' a force for evil.

Politically, then, Pringle was prepared, after meeting Philip *et al.*, to voice his outrage about injustices committed against natives - especially concerning the seizure of land - as well as the hypocrisy of slavery conducted in the name of Christianity. Pringle, however, cannot have written this poem without great emotional charge and conflict. A friend and member of his party, Peter Rennie, had been killed owing, indirectly, to a Bushman raid. He had considerable fear of the Bushmen since his party had lost several sheep and cattle to them. As Pringle writes, 'to us who are exposed to their attacks their hostility is no joke.'<sup>44</sup>

Pringle himself had recently called out a commando against them, fully aware that there might be casualties.<sup>45</sup> Yet he sides with them in a letter to Fairbairn because

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however, would not have seen these, and Klopper (1990) states rightly that this poem 'would have been regarded by contemporary colonists as calumnious in sentiment,' p. 47.

43 There is some indication that Pringle identified himself with the figure of the Bushman, or at least with the Bushmen's plight. In 'The Emigrant's Cabin', published in 1834, Fairbairn, *in dramatis persona*, refers to him as a 'philosophic *Bosjeman!*' (line 133). Elsewhere, Pringle refers to his own dwelling on the frontier as 'my Bushman's den.' (FB:I:110A, Eildon, 27 October 1825).

44 FB:I:88B, Bavians River, 22 September 1825.

45 The circumstances and implications of this will be discussed fully in chapter 6.2.

'they have scarcely any choice but of predatory warfare & precarious existence or of servitude to the Boers.'<sup>46</sup> Hence, Pringle's loyalties at this moment are deeply divided. The 'Bushman' is threatening to resist the very commando Pringle had sent out against him. Pringle must also have been troubled over the issue of land: the Bushmen had been pushed back into the desert by the farming activities of the Boers as well as the settlers. Hence, the desert was not really their 'domain'.<sup>47</sup> In the first version of the poem, the 'Bushman' claims it is the 'Boors & Gricquas' who have cultivated the fields where - as is unwritten - they once lived. Subsequently (in 1827) the Boers alone are mentioned: 'Let the proud boor possess his flocks' (line 1). By 1827, Pringle obviously did not want to implicate the Gricquas, who were also subject to dispossession, yet was still loathe to implicate the English and Scottish settlers, which included himself. Only in 1834 did he change the first line to read 'Let the proud White Man boast his flocks', thereby making the issue specifically racial and also implicating himself in the process of colonisation.

By late 1825 it is noticeable that Pringle's attention was shifting even further away from himself and the injustice committed against the settlers to focus on general injustices committed against the natives. For instance, he promises, on 4 September 1825, the same day he penned 'Bushman Song', to send the following note to Fairbairn: 'a speech of one of Lynx's [Makanna's] heemraden demanding back his chief after he was taken & detailing the whole history of European injustice toward[s] his natives. It is a noble piece of savage eloquence - though impro[perly] reported.'<sup>48</sup> Just over seventeen days later, Pringle's Bushman commando struck. Five people were slaughtered (see my discussion in chapter six). Andrew Bank notes, with

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46 FB:I:88B, Bavians River, 22 September 1825.

47 Pringle admits to knowing this: 'The only country they have is the desert & the best parts even of it are taken from them.' *ibid.*

48 FB:I:78, Milk River, 4 September 1825.

reference to Pringle's commando, that 'such a stark ambiguity between the active defence of frontier property and the glorification of the Xhosa capacity for war in "Makanna's Gathering", albeit from the safety of the metropole, is surely unprecedented in colonial history.'<sup>49</sup> Pringle sent this poem to Fairbairn on 12 October 1825 from his location on the frontier, not 'from the safety of the metropole' as Bank suggests. After the meeting with Philip and, crucially, *just before* the commando, Pringle had taken, at least poetically, the 'Bushman' and the 'Caffer's' side.

Pringle sent two poems to Fairbairn on this day: 'The War Song of Lynx'<sup>50</sup> and 'The Bechuana Boy'. 'Lynx' is an amplification of the 'Bushman's' threat in that it glorifies the call for a direct attack on the English, which actually took place in 1819 at Grahamstown.<sup>51</sup> The poem does not contain the humour of authorial distance of 'Speech of His Majesty King Mateebe'. Lynx (Makanna) does not appear as a caricature, or even as an a-historical portrait of a native, but as an historical individual, a worthy opponent of the British and, moreover, one who had right on his side. Lynx and his people have no choice but 'to conquer or be slaves' (line 20). Thus, in this poem, Pringle has Lynx articulate a much more aggressive response to colonialism than that of the 'Bushman' who will only attack if further provoked.

Two months after writing poetry 'with an evil conscience', then, we can see that Pringle's poetry suddenly shows a strong determination to fight injustice and oppression and retains little trace of the anguished soul-searching of poems like 'Afar in the Desert' and 'Nameless Spring'. For the first time his own determination to

49 Andrew Bank, *Liberals and their Enemies: Racial Ideology at the Cape of Good Hope, 1820 to 1850* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Cambridge University, 1995), p. 202.

50 Later 'Makanna's Gathering'. See appendix two for a transcription of the manuscript text.

51 Pereira and Chapman view this poem as initiating the "tradition" of protest poetry in South Africa.' Pereira and Chapman, p. xxiv.

'oppose and thwart' oppression (in 'To Oppression') is voiced by black speakers (in 'The Bushman's Song' and 'War Song of Lynx'). Coupled to this newly developed and increased poetic aggression, came a perceptible change in Pringle's attitude towards his audience. Thus, the role he envisages that his poetry will play changes. Certain comments made to Fairbairn about the poem 'The Bechuana Boy', given below, elucidate this change.

The original version of the poem does not survive, but its contents may be surmised from Pringle's comments, and from the extensively reworked version published in *Friendship's Offering* (July 1829): an orphaned 'Bechuana boy' encounters the poet and tells his tale. He had lost his family to the Bergenaars (a group of 'banditi') and was sold into slavery amongst the Boers. Here, his only solace was a 'fawn' which he had rescued from wild dogs. The son of his owner coveted it, however, and it was taken from him. He escaped at night into the desert and wandered alone until he was directed to the poet. After he had told his tale, all were moved, especially by his comment 'I am in the world alone', and a woman took pity on him and adopted him. Pringle comments to Fairbairn as follows:

"The Bechuana Boy" is adapted to please a class of readers whom you too much neglect [...]. I mean women, children, counting house clerks, country functionaries, & Aides de Camp, &c. This imitation of nursery poetry will I hope please them & yourself. Joking apart, I have tried this very simple style with something [of] a further view - to excite some sympathy in very common readers, for this class of unfortunate strangers, - about 5 or 6 hundred of whom have lately been distributed in this quarter of the Colony. Nor is my little tale altogether fictitious. Indeed almost every circumstance with the exception of the mode of my falling in with him is borrowed from the history of my own Bechuana Boy, as related by himself to me. I have thrown it into the shape you see - because I do not for several reasons wish it to be traced to me - or to be known as the author of these lines. Dr. Philip will be suspected perhaps but no matter - he has a broad back.<sup>52</sup>

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52 FB:I:98, Eildon, 12 October 1825

'The Bechuana Boy' is Pringle's first poem with an overtly anti-slavery theme, and his intention to create 'sympathy in very common readers' makes it a clear example of anti-slavery propaganda aimed at a broad audience, rather than an intellectual meditation on the subject. It appears, therefore, that as well as broadening the scope of subject matter in his poetry to include calls to fight the injustice committed against others, as in 'War Song of Lynx', Pringle was importantly also recognising that his poetry could be used to popularise a philanthropic cause. This necessitated a simplification of style, in order that his poetry might target a less literate and less educated public than it had done previously.

I have argued in chapter two that Pringle was torn between the 'nature' poetry of Wordsworth, the heroic poetry of Campbell, and the 'simple' sentimental poetry of the hearth, though he expressed a preference for the latter. In South Africa, and especially after the collapse of the *SACA* and *SAJ*, his role as a poet, as he conceived of it, became progressively entangled with a sense of guilt that poetry was an anodyne indulgence. However, 'War Song of Lynx', 'Bushman Song' and 'Bechuana Boy' demonstrate a new sense of purpose. Poetry is acquitted from the charge of merely being 'idle pleasure'. His poetry becomes politically vigorous and significant in differing ways: 'War Song of Lynx' and 'Bushman Song' are topical and politically explosive, whereas, though sentimental in style, 'Bechuana Boy', is pertinent to issues raised by colonial slavery.

One of the 'various reasons' that Pringle did not want 'The Bechuana Boy' to be attributed to him may have to do with the way he actually '[fell] in' with the boy. The five or six hundred Bechuans who had fled into the colony had been arrested by the government to be sold into slavery or distributed 'as servants' to the settlers. British settlers were not permitted to own slaves, but these 'servants' were bonded to their

new masters, almost feudally, in that if they absconded they could be arrested then imprisoned, deported or sold. Pringle had requested several of these 'servants' for members of his party, including 'a single young man or boy of 14 years age.'<sup>53</sup> The boy, when he was delivered, was an orphan called Marossi, his father's name. Even though Thomas and Margaret Pringle subsequently adopted him and took him back to England with them, he was still a 'servant' in October 1825.<sup>54</sup> Pringle, therefore, though not strictly a slave owner, would still have been aware that his implication with a form of bonded servitude must have been evident, and, hence, published the poem anonymously. Even so, it is clear that Pringle had found a new direction and energy in his work, and eleven days after writing 'Bechuana Boy', he wrote the following sonnet which rails against apathy:

#### A Common Character

Not altogether wicked - but so weak  
 That greater villains made of him their tool,  
 Not void of talent - yet so much a fool  
 As honour by dishonest means to seek;  
 5 Proud to the humble - to the haughty meek;  
 In flattering servile - insolent in Rule;  
 Keen for his own - for other's interest cool;  
 Hate in his heart - and smiles upon his cheek:  
 This man, with abject meanness joined to pride,  
 10 Was yet a pleasant fellow in his day;  
 Nor all unseemly traits he well could hide  
 Whene'er he mingled with the great and gay,  
 But he is buried now - and when he died  
 No one seemed sorry that he was away.<sup>55</sup>

53 Letter to W. M. Mackay, Esq., Landdrost of Somerset, 23 July 1825. Titterton collection. He received the boy on 11 September 1825: 'I have got a little Mantatee orphan Boy for M<sup>rs</sup> P. about 5 years of age,' FB:I:86B, Somerset, 11 September 1825. *The boy was, thus, younger than Pringle desired.*

54 Hinza Marossi, as he was christened by them, died of pneumonia after several illnesses in England. The Pringle's allowed the boy to keep his original name in actuality. At the end of the poem, he becomes 'Her [Margaret's] Child in every thing but name' (line 152).

55 FB:I:186, 23 October 1825. In connection with this sonnet he writes 'Sonnetts are a sort of writing which I find so easy, notwithstanding the rhyme, that I am apt to write them though I don't care much for other people's, & believe as few will care to read mine,' FB:I:102B, Bavian's River, 19 October 1825. Pringle prefers the Petrarchan model (following Wordsworth) rather than the Shakespearean model preferred by Keats.



The poem is simple in its diction and message, yet, if read autobiographically, presents a moral portrait of a man who has buried his past, is aware of the dangers of his pride, and has decided to be 'cool' towards his own interests rather than those of others. One need only compare the poet of 'Nameless Spring' seven months earlier who feared 'sink[ing] unknown' (line 14), or the anguished poet of 'Afar in the Desert' in 1823: 'And I - a lone exile remembered of none - / My high aims abandoned, - my good acts undone, - / Aweary of all that is under the sun' (lines 19-21). Of course, no transition is immediately complete, and Pringle still continued to indulge his fancies, as in the poem 'To the Ostrich' [see Appendix] which expresses the poet's desire to escape from human vice (the word 'guilt' - tellingly - has been deleted), misery and selfishness.<sup>56</sup> The difference now is that Pringle feels embarrassed writing these poems, as he tells Fairbairn: 'The lines to the ostrich in my own apprehension are of the description which neither Gods, men nor columns tolerate - in fact I suspect they are imbued with inveterate Common Place - & are moreover a sort of echo of "Afar in the Desert".'<sup>57</sup> He excuses himself further by saying that the poem was a product of idleness because he generally had very little to do on Sundays after the church service and school for Hottentots.<sup>58</sup>

Pringle, it appears, had drawn a distinction between poetry produced by idleness, and poetry which had an ameliorative or educative function, such as 'The Bechuana Boy'. This poem, as well as 'Bushman Song' and 'War Song of Lynx' have native speakers expressing their maltreatment by, dissatisfaction with, and opposition to

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<sup>56</sup> Perhaps there is also an overtone in the poem that if the author fled with the ostrich he would be able to bury his head in the sand.

<sup>57</sup> FB:I:108, Sunday Evening, 23 October 1825.

<sup>58</sup> For an eye-witness account of one of these services see Philipps, p. 265. Pringle insisted that the Boers and Hottentots who came to the services be seated together, the result being that the Boers soon ceased to frequent them. *Philipps, Scenes and Occurrences in Albany and Catterburg*.



white colonists, respectively. Before writing these poems, Pringle had said that he had flown to 'versifying like a man with an evil conscience who flies to drink to drown remorse' (see p. 123). After the meeting with Philip, and the affair of the Bushman commando, however, if I might extend Pringle's metaphor, he had recognised that though his own poetry might be produced and consumed for its anodyne effect, it might also, like buchu brandy, be applied to society's wounds.

Even though Pringle had found a new purpose in and for his poetry, most of his writings during this period (including poetry, articles for the new *SACA*, letters, information and depositions for the Commissioners of Enquiry, and his own 'Residence') were not earning any money. Pringle still had debts to pay and a family to support. Fortunately for him, he had been contracted by George Thompson to write up his 'Travels' (to be discussed in chapter five). He was aware that he had to devote most of his time and attention to that task just in order to survive. Pringle set to it in earnest, but also continued his barrage of documents to the Commissioners. On 10 November, however, Pringle received a proposition which was to end his 'exile' (as he put it) on the frontier. A certain Captain Owen offered him free passage to England and a commission in return for writing up his own 'travels'.<sup>59</sup> Of course, Pringle incurred more debts getting himself and recently expanded family back to Cape Town, but they sailed for England in April 1826 after a residence of just under five and a half years. He left the Cape, with his prospects there ruined and large debts to pay, filled with a sense of outrage against colonial oppression and determined to fight both for his own cause and that of humanity.

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<sup>59</sup> Owen withdrew from the agreement after the Pringle's had returned to England in 1826, leaving Pringle with even more debt for his wife and sister-in-law's passage. Owen was a recognised anti-slavery supporter. For more details of his activities and contact with Pringle see Meiring, pp. 124, 125, 131.

## 5: London

After a 'tedious voyage of nearly twelve weeks' the Pringles arrived in London.<sup>1</sup> Given the fondness and nostalgic longing for Scotland that Pringle expressed in his poetry written at the Cape, it might seem strange that he did not return to Edinburgh, but in his letters to Fairbairn he expresses no intention of returning there, even in the long term; indeed, his intention was to return to South Africa as soon as his claims had been redressed. When he arrived in London in 1826, moreover, return to Edinburgh was impossible as Pringle had only five pounds in his pocket when he landed, and owed the publishers Underwoods around three hundred pounds. But the real reason for staying in London, as is evident from the letter mentioned above, is that Pringle wished to have access to the Commissioners of Enquiry and the parliament, and to earn some money as a writer and journalist while he waited for his claims to be heard. He ascertained after only six days in London that nothing had been said about Somerset in the previous session of parliament, and that the publishing trade was in dire straits:

The Literary trade is exceedingly flat just now. Campbell's Mag<sup>ne</sup>. & Blackwoods are the only ones that sell well. The Edinb. Review has become the property of Longman & Co. J.G. Lockhart is Editor of the Quarterly. There is little or no encouragement for new works. In short like other manufacturers business has been overdone. There is a glut in the market - some of the Chief manufacturers are ruined & many of the operations are starving. Under these circumstances it will be impossible to bring out any work on the Cape unless there is a great stir about Lord C. &c next Session. Something however may be done in the newspapers.<sup>2</sup>

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1 FB:I:123, London, 12 July 1826.

2 FB:I:132B, London, 12 July 1826. Pringle, therefore, was obviously aware that attacking Somerset in the press could eventually be to his own financial advantage.

As an authority on South Africa, Pringle would clearly be able to make a name for himself, but he could not yet afford to be too outspoken concerning affairs at the Cape, since his claims for compensation were still being considered. Pringle devoted most of his time to petitioning the Commissioners, and to completing *Thompson's Travels*, which took a further five months to finish. In September 1826, however, Pringle received a final reply from the Colonial Office that his claims would not be redressed, which, though it depressed him greatly, stirred him to new effort:<sup>3</sup>

They'll [the Colonial Office] find however that I am not yet done with them, though I will not bring forward my own case any farther. I have got my fist into the press however & I'll give them a rousing up before I cease with them. You will see by the *Oriental Herald* for Oct. what I am about there - & ere long I expect to find access to two or three other Journals in various shapes to assail the vagabonds. I will divide & multiply myself against them like Southey's Kehama when he attacked the monarch of Hell. [...] Dr. Philip's attention is engrossed with the Hottentots & Bushmen & his "Society" seems to be paralyzed by the fear of being branded as "Politicians." Nevertheless I will lift up my voice alone against them. Verily I will "soar then like any nightingale." [cf. Bottom in *Midsummer Night's Dream*] As the African Veld Cornet told us when we first landed at Algoa Bay - "I vil let dem know who's me."<sup>4</sup>

Despite parodying himself as a fool, Pringle was not joking about dividing himself like a hydra to attack on all fronts, and from October 1826 onwards he released a torrent of journalism on the Cape to magazines, and to *The Times* newspaper. It is clear that he was still motivated by a sense of personal anger, but also, as he had resigned himself to dropping his own case, the articles are more wide-ranging and general in scope. He did not concentrate on any particular group or topic, as Dr. Philip

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3 "You are aware," he was told, "that it was exclusively for your conduct as a settler that his Lordship <Lord Bathurst> felt inclined to hold out to you any encouragement, but as you have quitted the Cape, you have placed it outside his Lordship's power to assist your views in this manner that might have been done if you had remained in the Colony." (A rather pretty piece of diplomatic hypocrisy, since neither Greig nor Fairbairn, who applied for redress in the Cape, received it!)" Meiring, p. 133.

4 FB:I:134-134A, London, 30 September 1826.

was doing with the Hottentots and Bushmen. Furthermore, Pringle no longer had any fear of being branded a 'politician', and seemed more inclined to be seen as a politician rather than a philanthropist like Dr. Philip.<sup>5</sup>

Fortunately for Pringle, the possibility of making himself heard was greatly enhanced in October 1826 when he became the editor of the *Oriental Herald*.<sup>6</sup> His first push was a series of articles, which ran until June 1827, called 'State of the Cape of Good Hope in 1825.'<sup>7</sup> These wide ranging articles consider the government of Lord Charles Somerset, the Cape's parliamentary system and judicial systems, and the commando system used for attacking tribes beyond the frontier.<sup>8</sup> The final article considers the state of the Boers and Hottentots in the country. Most of the material in these articles had been collected by Pringle during his time on the frontier, and presented to the Commissioners of Enquiry, but, as his private case had been turned down, Pringle's intention here was to give his findings a public hearing. Though the articles are anonymous (most are simply signed 'A Colonist'), Pringle sets himself up as an authority on the country, and his tone is that of a political reformer, that is, he states quite clearly in each situation what steps he thinks should be taken in order to improve the situation.<sup>9</sup> But, whereas Pringle worried that his statements for the Commissioners might have had too much 'pepper and mustard' in them while he was

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5 Compare Pringle and Fairbairn's claims to neutrality in the *SACA*, 31 March 1824, p. 98.

6 Pringle changed the title of the journal from *The Oriental Herald and Colonial Review* to *The Oriental Herald and Journal of General Literature*. The change in name reflects Pringle's constant interest in literary matters, but may also have been designed to boost sales in England amongst potential readers who had no particular political interest in the colonies, given the circulation trouble in the magazine trade which Pringle mentions above. The rapidity of his appointment as editor also indicates the high regard in which Pringle was held as an editor in England.

7 *Oriental Herald*, 11 (October - December 1826), 25-39, 260-267, 603-610; 12 (February 1827), 276-281; 13 (April - June 1827), 97-102, 331-333, 551-556.

8 Pringle's comments on the commando system are in a series of three letters which were originally sent to Lord Bathurst.

9 For instance, Pringle states that the Hottentots 'should be placed on the footing of a true peasantry,' *Oriental Herald*, 13, p. 555.

still in South Africa, his attacks against Somerset show signs of becoming increasingly polemical.<sup>10</sup> In November 1827, for instance, he wrote:

Lord Charles Somerset's system of administration has been termed arbitrary, tyrannical, ignorant, capricious. All these, and other bad qualities, no doubt, belonged to it, and some of them in a very prominent degree, but its most peculiar and characteristic distinction was its *vindictive spirit*.<sup>11</sup>

Also 'outspoken' was Pringle's article on slavery,<sup>12</sup> which appeared in the *New Monthly Magazine* for October 1826.<sup>13</sup> Voss shows that this is the first example of the 'radical emancipationist argument' to emerge from the Cape.<sup>14</sup> Pringle commences with a statement that 'the mildness of slavery at the Cape' has been dwelt on by various travellers, and echoed in the 'Quarterly Review and similar publications.' The article aims to prove the contrary. Furthermore, even if slavery at the Cape is comparatively 'mild', which is not Pringle's view, he invites the reader to speculate on the conditions of slaves in colonies where slavery is admitted as being 'worse'. The article consists of anecdotes about the treatment of slaves, mostly drawn from

<sup>10</sup> See FB:I:64, 1 September 1825, for instance.

<sup>11</sup> Pringle, 'British Settlement in Albany under Lord Charles Somerset,' *Oriental Herald*, 15 (November 1827), 246-256 (p. 247). The first half of this article appeared in the *Oriental Herald*, 14 (September 1827), 479-486.

<sup>12</sup> 'It is little wonder that such an outspoken article caught the attention of the Anti-Slavery Society or that its members should have felt that few people could serve it better than its author,' Meiring, p. 135. Pringle was appointed secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society in March 1827.

<sup>13</sup> Pringle, 'Letters from South Africa, No. I - Slavery,' *New Monthly Magazine* (17 October 1826), 481-488. The article was signed 'Y' and dated Cape of Good Hope, 5 January 1826. The magazine was edited by the poet Thomas Campbell, whom Pringle had eulogised in an early sonnet [see chapter two]. Pringle's friend Robert Story remembers Pringle saying in November 1805 that he took particular delight in Park's *Travels* and Campbell's *Pleasures of Hope*. 'In his admiration of Campbell's verse, may be traced the germinating love of freedom and abhorrence of oppression, which became the ruling passion and determining motive of his future life,' in Conder, p. 9.

<sup>14</sup> Voss, "'The Slaves Must Be Heard:': Thomas Pringle and the Dialogue of South African Servitude," *English in Africa*, 17 (May 1990), p. 77. Compare also Thomas Miller's *Considerations on the Exact Position of the Slave Question* (Cape Town: 1831), and William Wright's *Remarks on the Demoralizing Influence of Slavery* (London: 1828) and *Slavery at the Cape of Good Hope* (London: 1831). Voss (1990) points out how Pringle 'is a presence behind both these writers'. William Wright was present during the week in 1825 with Pringle, Stockenström, Reade and Philips.



Pringle's own experience, extracts from anti-slavery travel writers like Sparrman, and two columns titled 'Masters v. Slaves' and 'Slaves v. Masters' which juxtapose sentences of the Cape courts given for similar offences in order to show the inequality of their treatment.

One of the most striking vignettes is the tale of a mother being auctioned, together with her children, to different bidders:

There could not have been a finer subject for an able painter, than this unhappy group. The tears, the anxiety, the anguish of the mother, while she met the gaze of the multitude, eyed the different countenances of the bidders, or cast a heart-rending look upon the children; and the simplicity and sorrow of the poor young ones, while they clung to their distracted parent, wiping their eyes, and half concealing their faces, - contrasted with the marked insensibility and jocular countenances of the spectators and purchasers, - furnished a striking commentary on the miseries of slavery, and its debasing effects upon the hearts of its abettors. While the woman was in this distressed situation she was asked, 'Can you feed sheep?' Her reply was so indistinct that it escaped me; but it was probably in the negative, for her purchaser rejoined in a loud and harsh voice, 'Then I will teach you with the sjamboc.' [A whip made of Rhinoceros hide - Pringle's note] The mother and her three children were sold to three separate purchasers; and they were literally torn from each other. How just the remarks of Cowper,

There is no flesh in man's obdurate heart -  
It does not feel for man!<sup>15</sup>

This sketch is overtly pathetic in tone. Pringle alludes to painting and poetry in order to make the scene as vivid as possible for European readers, and appeals directly to popular sentimentality as a mother and her children are involved. The sketch, however, is followed directly by the columns on the court cases, and it is probably this combination of emotive, persuasive writing, and factual reportage which appealed to the Anti-Slavery Society.<sup>16</sup> In other words, the article can be seen as appealing to

<sup>15</sup> In Pereira and Chapman, p. 146.

<sup>16</sup> Walvin notes that in the 1820's and 1830's 'statistics and hard empirical data became major themes in political argument', Walvin, p. 12. Pringle was certainly contributing towards this trend.



both sentimental and serious readers of the time, as well as to both males and females.<sup>17</sup> Pringle's arguments against slavery are also simple to comprehend. His central premise is that slavery degrades and debases both master and slave in equal measure: 'It is slavery, corrupting, hardening, brutalizing slavery, that produces this deplorable change in human feelings; and while it degrades to the dust the wretched victim of oppression, it vitiates, by a terrible reaction, the heart and character of the oppressor.'<sup>18</sup> The examples adduced in the article serve principally to illustrate this point. The logical consequence of the theory, however, is that neither slaves nor slave-owners are capable of helping themselves because they are already degraded. For this reason, here and in later articles, Pringle always insists that it is the duty of the English, within their empire, to abolish slavery and govern responsibly: 'Let England remove that unspeakable curse, and govern them [the colonists at the Cape] as she should do, - and *then* I will venture to say of my fellow Colonists, that there is no moral or intellectual excellence, of which they will not speedily be found capable.'<sup>19</sup> This view cohered well with the aims of the Anti-Slavery Society. The society aimed to mobilise the people of Britain against slavery and effect change in the British parliament. Pringle's analysis and presentation of slavery suited him ideally to the position of secretary.

Meanwhile, Pringle had other axes to grind concerning the Cape. The most important of these being the treatment of the 'Caffers' (or Xhosa peoples) in the Cape and beyond the Cape frontier. His complaints were expressed in a series of three

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17 Pringle never exempts women from charges of cruelty, however: 'I have even known ladies, born and educated in England, charitable and benevolent in their general character, yet capable of standing over their female slaves while they were flogged, and afterwards ordering salt and pepper to be rubbed into their lacerated flesh!' in Pereira and Chapman, p. 143.

18 *loc. cit.*

19 *ibid.*, p. 148. The above argument is in keeping with Pringle's view of human nature, as expressed in the *SACA*, 4 February 1824, p. 34.

articles published from January-April 1827 in the *Oriental Herald*.<sup>20</sup> These articles were signed 'AFER', the pseudonym of Captain Andries Stockenstrom.<sup>21</sup> Pringle did gain much of his information about the frontier and its history from Stockenstrom, but there is very little doubt that these articles were written by Pringle himself since, amongst other details, they contain anecdotes about Pringle's own father on the settlement, which only Pringle could have known.<sup>22</sup> Pringle's exact motivation for remaining anonymous cannot be ascertained: however, one possible and very probable reason is that he wished to protect his relatives on the frontier from possible victimisation by the Colonial government.<sup>23</sup> In addition, Stockenstrom was already known as an outspoken critic of government policies regarding the frontier.

The articles themselves give clear indication that Pringle was outraged by events on the frontier, and that he felt morally obliged to speak out. As a justification for writing the articles he asserts 'there are occasions, also, when silence, though safe, may be criminal.'<sup>24</sup> The articles chronicle the history of atrocities committed against the Caffers, and in particular the fact that the 'neutral territory' between the Fish and Keiskamma rivers had been 'torn from them'.<sup>25</sup> Pringle excuses any acts of violence committed by the Caffers as acts of self-defence: 'Their vengeance had been wantonly provoked, and it is little wonder if bloodshed often accompanied robbery.'<sup>26</sup> The Caffers themselves are characterised as a 'mild [i.e. peaceable] and manly race' locked

20 Pringle, 'The Caffer Frontier,' *Oriental Herald*, 12 (January and February 1827), 11-21, 225-236; 13 (April 1827), 9-17.

21 Pringle knew this to be the case as he quoted a portion of an article by 'AFER' on migrating springboks in *Thompson's Travels*, which he had already published in the *SAJ*, 1, pp. 72-73. In *Thompson's Travels*, Pringle says 'the following [...] is from the pen of my friend Captain Stockenstrom,' *Thompson's Travels*, vol. 1, p. 130.

22 Pringle, 'The Caffer Frontier,' *Oriental Herald*, 12 (February 1827), p. 253.

23 Somerset had already refused an application for servants by Pringle's brother John, on the grounds that he was related to Thomas. When Somerset was told that, unlike Thomas, John had no education, he retorted: 'The less education the better.' For Pringle's full account of this story, see his undated letter to the Commissioners of Enquiry, FB:I:176-176B.

24 Pringle, 'The Caffer Frontier,' *Oriental Herald*, 12 (January 1827), p. 11.

25 *ibid.*, p. 13.

26 *ibid.*, p. 12.

in a battle with “‘Christian” savages’. Pringle also uses the opportunity to continue his war of words against the Somersets. For instance, he tells the following anecdote which involves a reported exchange between Major Henry Somerset (Lord Charles’s son) and a stranger. Henry Somerset speaks first: “‘powder and ball, by G-d, are the only means to civilize the Caffers!” “Good God! what a sentiment,” replied the stranger; “whether then are they or you the greater savages?”’<sup>27</sup> Of great importance in tracing Pringle’s poetic development is that he began to write poems for the *Oriental Herald* which included material from his articles and which were illustrative of the actual events he was describing, as well as the political points he was making. These poems are designed specifically to provoke an emotive response of sympathy for the Caffers, and a sense of outrage against their oppressors. One of these is ‘The Caffer Commando’:

#### The Caffer Commando

- Hark! - heard ye the signals of triumph afar?  
 'Tis our Caffer Commando returning from war:  
 The voice of their laughter comes loud on the wind,  
 Nor heed they the curses that follow behind.
- 5     For who cares for him, the poor Caffer that wails  
        Where the smoke rises dim from yon desolate vales -  
        That wails for his little ones killed in the fray,  
        And his herds by the Christians carried away?
- 10    Or who cares for him, that once cultured this spot,  
        Where his tribe is extinct and their story forgot?  
        As many another, ere twenty years pass,  
        Will only be known by their bones in the grass!
- 15    Who, then, is the bandit? - the heathen - or he,  
        With his Christian burghers and Cape chivalry,  
        Who, marking his track with fire, rapine, and blood,  
        Has left half a nation despoil'd of their food?

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<sup>27</sup> Pringle, ‘The Caffer Frontier,’ *Oriental Herald*, 12 (February 1827), p. 227.

20 'But they are savages - not worth a thought -  
Who thus must be taught to behave as they ought;  
And six thousand cattle will make a good show  
In print - and in paying some pledges we owe!

'Promotion will follow - and, as for the rest,  
'Tis *powder-and-ball* suits these savages best:  
You may cant about Missions and Civilization -  
My plan is to shoot - or enslave the whole nation.'

25 Thus spoke the gay Chief, in his arrogant mood -  
And his words are now writing in African blood!

30 Dark Katta is howling: the eager jackal,  
As the lengthening shadows more drearily fall,  
Shrieks forth his hymn to the hornèd moon;  
And the lord of the desert will follow him soon:  
And the tiger-wolf laughs in his bone-strewed brake,  
As he calls on his mate and her cubs to awake;  
And the panther and leopard come leaping along;  
All hymning to Hecate a festival song:  
35 For the tumult is over, the slaughter hath ceased -  
And the vulture hath bidden them all to the feast!<sup>28</sup>

In this poem, the commando (which is an actual historical event described in the articles) intrudes into and destroys the idyllic pastoral scene which Pringle represented in 'Caffer Song' (1824), and which contained no trace of violence except for hunting. Whereas 'Caffer Song' portrays the 'Caffer' merely as a hunter and herder, the 'Caffers' in this poem are a 'nation'. They cultivate the land and have a 'story' or history. Given Pringle's own complicity with a Bushman commando, he bears some indirect guilt for the 'bones in the grass'. In reparation, however, he seems now determined both in poetry and prose that the 'story' of those slaughtered would not be 'forgot'. The subject matter of this poem bears an intimate relation to the subject matter

28 In *Oriental Herald*, 13 (April 1827), pp. 39-40. In 1834 Pringle substituted lines 13-26 with the following: 'And the sons of the Keisi, the Kei, the Gareep, / With the Gunja and Ghona in silence shall sleep: / For England hath spoke in her tyrannous mood, / And the edict is writing in African blood!' Pereira and Chapman say that this change is 'interesting - and perhaps surprising,' p. 104. The change may be explained by the hypothesis that Pringle no longer wanted to target Henry Somerset in particular, and wished to lay the blame for the whole system of commandos on 'England's' shoulders, rather than those of the 'gay Chief,' that is, Henry Somerset.

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of Pringle's articles on the Caffer Frontier. As a piece of emotive writing which is intimately linked to, and which corroborates, albeit tendentiously, his assertions in prose, it can be viewed as a complement to his political project.

Given this growing link between Pringle's poetry and journalism, we should consider how his own poems, which he inserted as footnotes to *Thompson's Travels*, interact with Thompson's text.



### 5.1: *Thompson's Travels and Adventures in Southern Africa*

As Vernon S. Forbes, the modern editor of *Thompson's Travels* stresses, it is extremely difficult to know 'which of [Pringle and Thompson] contributed more to the actual writing of it.'<sup>29</sup> Pringle had been working on the manuscript for over a year and his correspondence with Fairbairn makes it clear that his contribution was substantial. Pringle's contributions are both editorial, and direct as a contributor.

Thompson gave his text to Pringle in the form of diaries and notebooks. Since these do not survive, it is impossible to know with certainty whether they merely contained notes, or constituted a coherent narrative almost ready for publication. The edited text, however, is presented in the form of dated journal entries which oscillate between factual description and meditative sequences. This is marked in the following extract:

May 1. - This morning, long before daybreak, I started for the Knysna, with fresh horses and a guide. For some hours I travelled through the dark and dismal ravine in which flows the Zwart River, and at daybreak found myself near a place called Pampoen-kraal. [...] Very few elephants are now to be found in the remaining forests, though buffaloes still abound. The scenery around this spot is certainly picturesque and imposing in a high degree. The lofty, rugged mountains on the left, crested with clouds, and clothed along their skirts with majestic forests, - those woods irregular, dark, hoary with moss, and ancient-looking almost as the rocks which frown above them, or the eternal ocean itself which murmurs at their feet, - form altogether a scene of grandeur which fills the imagination with magnificent and romantic images; accompanied however with ideas of wildness, vastness, and solitary seclusion, almost oppressive to the heart.<sup>30</sup>

The tone and register of the first and second paragraphs are strikingly diverse. The first paragraph is straightforward and matter-of-fact in tone. The second is poetic (the rocks 'frown'), and demonstrates the keen Romantic appreciation of landscape which

<sup>29</sup> *Thompson's Travels and Adventures in Southern Africa*, edited, with notes, by Vernon S. Forbes, 2 vols (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1967), p. xx.

<sup>30</sup> *Thompson's Travels*, vol. 1, p. 4.

characterises much of Pringle's natural description in the *Narrative*.<sup>31</sup> The first person narrator of the first paragraph disappears in the second, where the narrative voice seems to corroborate what it had said: 'The scenery around this spot *is certainly picturesque*' [my italics]. Even though the contrasts of style in this passage cannot be taken as conclusive proof of Pringle's influence, it seems more than likely that Pringle converted a rather simple prose report into a more finely-wrought piece of narrative, by glossing Thompson's narrative descriptions, thus imbuing them with emotive power.

Another instance where Pringle's influence can be detected is in Thompson's report on the speech of King Mateebe (vol. 1, pp. 90-94), since Thompson's original notes on this speech were actually published by Pringle years before in the *SACA*.<sup>32</sup> I will give an extract firstly of Thompson's and secondly of 'Pringle's' version, by way of comparison:

Ye sons of Mallahowan, the Mantatees are a strong and conquering people; they have destroyed many nations; they are coming to destroy us. Moffat has informed us respecting their manners, their deeds, their weapons, their intentions - by Moffat we see our danger; we Bechuanas, or Matclapees, Matcloroos, Myrees, Baralongs, and Baracoutas, are not able to stand against the Mantatees. The Griquas have been informed of this by Moffat: he held a meeting with them - they are coming: - they will unite with us against the Mantatees: - we must now concert, conclude, and be determined to stand: - this case is a great one.<sup>33</sup>

Ye sons of Mallahawan! The Mantatees are a strong and conquering people. They have destroyed many nations; they are now on their march to destroy us. Moffat has gained information for us respecting their exploits, their weapons, their mode of fighting, their bad designs. Through the care of Moffat we now fully see our danger. We Bechuanas, or Matclhapees, Matclharoos and Myrees, are not able to stand against the Mantatees. But the Griquas have been called by Moffat to our help. He has held a council with their chiefs; they are coming on horses to unite with us against the

31 See, for instance, *Narrative*, p. 7, where the landscape exerts an equally exhilarating and oppressive influence on the beholder.

32 *SACA*, 7 January 1824, p. 5; 14 January 1824, pp. 9-12. A week later Pringle produced his humorous poem 'Speech of his Majesty King Mateebe,' parodying the reported speech.

33 *SACA*, 14 January 1824, p. 9.

enemy. We must now therefore concert, conclude, and fully resolve to stand. The cause is a great one - it involves our very existence as a people.<sup>34</sup>

It is clear that Pringle's version is prolix, more erudite, and more elegant. He leaves the body of the text intact, but adds frequent glosses of his own to statements made by the chief and Thompson. For instance, 'The case is a great one', becomes 'The cause is a great one - it involves our very existence as a people.' Pringle's substitution of 'case' with 'cause' introduces a sense of just political struggle, rather than the happenstance of a single case.

Pringle's effect on the text then, in terms of style, was to give it a literary flavour, to embellish the descriptions, and to add several of his own glosses which politicise the text. Even though this has a subtle ideological effect on the text, it should be stressed that *Thompson's Travels* cannot be read as an accurate reflection of Pringle's own political thinking. For instance, Thompson praises 'his Excellency' Lord Charles Somerset for improving the breed of Cape Horses<sup>35</sup> (praising Lord Charles Somerset for anything is unknown in Pringle's writings after 1824). In addition, Thompson suggests farming the 'ceded' or 'neutral' territory,<sup>36</sup> a policy which Pringle directly opposed in his articles on the 'Caffer Frontier' which appeared during the same year that *Thompson's Travels* was published.<sup>37</sup> Pringle seems to have been a scrupulous ghost-writer. His own direct contributions to the book, therefore, do not necessarily agree in sentiment with the views expressed in Thompson's text.

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34 *Thompson's Travels*, vol. 1, p. 90.

35 *Thompson's Travels*, vol. 2, p. 173.

36 *Thompson's Travels*, vol. 2, p. 118.

37 See, for instance, *Oriental Herald* (April 1827), p. 16.

The book consists of three parts. The first covers Thompson's journey to the eastern frontier and the country of the Bechuanas, followed by chapters describing the tribes he encountered. The second part has a similar structure, except that it describes Thompson's journey to the country of the Korannas, Bushmen, and Namaquas, now the Northern Cape. The narrative of the journey is one of privation and difficulty. As Pratt says of a new wave of travel writing after the 1820's, which she calls the 'capitalist vanguard', 'the travellers struggle in unequal battle against scarcity, inefficiency, laziness, discomfort, poor horses, bad weather, delays.'<sup>38</sup> Thompson's work, unlike Pringle's *Narrative*, fits this description, which the title of the third part confirms: 'Observations on the present condition of the Dutch and English inhabitants; on the adaption of the country for further colonization; and on its agricultural and commercial capabilities.'<sup>39</sup> Thompson's stated aim in publishing the book was to describe the 'agricultural and commercial capabilities of the Cape',<sup>40</sup> the character and condition of its inhabitants - native and European - and everything else which had not been written about the country since Barrow's *Travels into the Interior of Southern Africa*. He writes that his 'objects were partly of a commercial, partly of an exploratory nature'.<sup>41</sup> The aim and structure of the book, therefore, could absorb much information about the colony not strictly related to Thompson's actual 'travels and adventures', which gave room for Pringle to insert his own contributions. Pringle's longest prose contribution is 'Notices and Anecdotes of the African Lion', a

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38 Pratt, p. 148.

39 *Thompson's Travels*, vol. 2, p. 86.

40 Thompson's preface, p. xxvii.

41 *Thompson's Travels*, vol. 1, p. 1. Given this agenda, it would be fascinating to know whether the following prophetic statement regarding the Chief Chaka was made by Thompson, or inserted by Pringle: 'He [Chaka] cannot, of course, foresee that the admission of a few mercantile adventurers may perhaps ultimately lead to the subjugation of his kingdom and posterity', vol. 1, p. 174.

slightly modified version of his articles on the lion in the *SAJ*.<sup>42</sup> Pringle claims in *African Sketches* that most of the material on Albany and the conditions of the settlers was supplied by him.<sup>43</sup> In the context of the book, Pringle's writing on the settlers can be read as an extension of the book's commercial and colonising agenda. Pringle says that the article on lions is inserted 'by way of entertainment for lovers of light reading'.<sup>44</sup> Thus, they expand on the promise of 'adventure' in Thompson's title. The articles on lions and settlers, however, are addenda to the actual travel narrative. They do not interact directly with Thompson's text, as do the poems.

Of the poems, Forbes says that 'they were a good advertisement for [Pringle], and they gave the book a literary flavour in the style then fashionable.'<sup>45</sup> Pringle, however, had a further objective in view. In the review which Pringle himself wrote of *Thompson's Travels* for the *New Monthly Magazine*, he calls his poems 'poetic sketches of manners and scenery in South Africa.'<sup>46</sup> This implies that the poems are illustrative of the country, and serve the same function as the many vignettes and sketches which appear in the book. Thus, they have an informational as well as a literary role. Of the seven poems published, only three, 'The Lion and the Camelopard', 'Afar in the Desert', and 'Song of the Wild Bushman' had been published previously, which suggests that the others were written specifically for this publication.<sup>47</sup> Of the three poems mentioned above, the first is appropriately annexed

42 *SAJ*, 1 (January-February 1824), 26-33; vol. 2 (March-April 1824), 118-125. The article is in *Thompson's Travels*, vol. 2, pp. 220-236. For a description of the changes made by Pringle and Thompson to the *SAJ* articles, see J.V.L. Rennie, 'The Lion in the Writing of Pringle, Thompson & Philipps', *Africana Notes & News*, 17 (1966), 91-108 (pp. 94-95).

43 *African Sketches*, p. 344. Especially in *Thompson's Travels*, vol. 2, pp. 101-115. For notice of further direct contributions by Pringle see Forbes, preface to *Thompson's Travels*, p. xx.

44 *Thompson's Travels*, p. 220.

45 Forbes, introduction to *Thompson's Travels*, pp. xix - xx.

46 *New Monthly Magazine*, 19 (1827), 385 - 394 (p. 392).

47 Forbes, in 'Introduction' to *Thompson's Travels*, p. xix, following A. M. L. Robinson (1962), p. 46, claims that only two poems had been previously published as they were not aware that 'Song

to Pringle's notes on the lion. 'Afar in the Desert' is inserted because it 'expresses so well the feelings of a traveller in the wilderness, and contains such lively and appropriate sketches of African scenery.'<sup>48</sup> The flight from the corruption of colonial society, which is central to the poem is, therefore, not stressed at all, but is nevertheless present and stands in contrast to Thompson's purely naturalistic description of the desert. In the case of 'Song of the Wild Bushman', the context in which it appears is a story by Thompson about a 'poort' or pass where a group of Bushmen had ambushed a group of Boers. The text calls the Bushmen 'crafty and vindictive savages', yet, immediately afterwards the following sentence appears: 'This story is at least an evidence of the feelings which the arrogant oppression of the white men have excited among the tribes of the desert.'<sup>49</sup> If this sentence is Pringle's own, then it provides added motivation for inserting the poem after the accusation that the Bushmen are 'crafty and vindictive'. Pringle's note to the poem says that 'the following verses are designed to express the sentiments with which these persecuted tribes may be supposed to regard the Colonists.'<sup>50</sup> In other words, Pringle admits that he is only giving a putative voice to the feelings of Bushmen, but in this context, the poem acts as a corrective to Thompson's text: Pringle is defending the Bushmen, and explaining the charge that they are 'crafty and vindictive'.

The other four poems are 'The Bushman', 'The Caffer', 'The Hottentot' and 'The Koranna'.<sup>51</sup> The titles themselves suggest that the poems are vignettes or portraits,

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of the Wild Bushman' was written by Pringle on 4 September 1825 (FB:I:78), and appeared in the SACA, 21 September 1825 as 'Bushman Song'.

48 *Thompson's Travels*, vol. 2, p. 17. Pringle made some changes to the SAJ version, especially the insertion of lines 61-64 which describe a 'koodoo' and a 'quagha'.

49 *Thompson's Travels*, vol. 2, p. 54.

50 *Thompson's Travels*, vol. 2, p. 54n.

51 'The Koranna', *Thompson's Travels*, vol. 1, p. 123, differs from the other three poems in that it is an apolitical, ethnographic description of the dress and habits of a group of these people, and is, in this sense, merely illustrative of Thompson's text. The 'Koranna' were geographically isolated from the colony and, thus, not active participants in the frontier 'contact zone'.





descriptive of the people they represent. Agreeing with this, Thompson says, for instance, that 'The Hottentot' resembles a vignette (at the beginning of chapter 3, vol. 1) drawn by his friend Dr. Heurtly and that, though Pringle wrote the poem before seeing the portrait, the resemblance is there because 'both drew from life.'<sup>52</sup> Heurtly's vignette shows an old Hottentot, wearing a karross, and holding a gun, larger than himself, almost as a support. The resemblances are, however, not complete. The whites of the eyes of Heurtly's Hottentot flash out from under his wide-brimmed hat, giving the figure a sinister quality. In contrast, the eyes of Pringle's Hottentot do not flash. The poem itself is a virulent denunciation of slavery, colonial dispossession of land, and colonial prejudice, over and above the physical portrait which Thompson stresses:

#### The Hottentot

Mild, melancholy, and sedate he stands,  
 Tending another's flocks upon the fields -  
 His father's once - where now the white-man builds  
 His home, and issues forth his proud commands:  
 5 His dark eye flashes not; his listless hands  
 Support the boor's huge firelock; but the shields  
 And quivers of his race are gone: he yields,  
 Submissively, his freedom and his lands.  
 Has he no courage? - Once he had - but, lo!  
 10 The felon's chain hath worn him to the bone.  
 No enterprise? - Alas! the brand, the blow  
 Have humbled him to dust - his HOPE is gone.  
 "He's a base-hearted hound - not worth his food" -  
 His master cries; - "he has no *gratitude!*"<sup>53</sup>

Thompson claims that Pringle's portrayal of the Hottentot is accurate but unlike Pringle, he does not comment in his note on the morality of removing the Hottentots' freedom and land. This is not a surprising omission given the avowedly commercial

<sup>52</sup> Thompson's *Travels*, vol. 1, p. 30.

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*

and colonial agenda of the book. Calder says that the poem 'steps right out of its Romantic time, prefiguring, in its remarkably bitter punchlines, the indignation of Sassoon and Owen in their First World War poems.'<sup>54</sup> This indignation acts as a corrective to Thompson's agenda. 'The Caffer' is no less outspoken. In this poem Pringle is concerned to justify and exonerate the actions of the Caffers on the frontier, the place where the 'further colonization' in the title of the third part of the book is to take place.<sup>55</sup>

### The Caffer

Lo! where he crouches by the Kloof's dark side,  
 Eyeing the farmer's lowing herds afar;  
 Impatient watching, till the evening star  
 Lead forth the twilight dim, that he may glide  
 5 Like panther to the prey. With freeborn pride  
 He scorns the herdsman, nor regards the scar  
 Of recent wound, - but burnishes for war  
 His assegai and targe of buffalo hide.  
 He is a robber? - True; it is a strife  
 10 Between the black-skinned bandit and the white.  
 A savage? - Yes; though loth to aim at life,  
 Evil for evil fierce he doth requite.  
 A heathen? - Teach him, then, thy better creed,  
 Christian! if thou deserv'st that name indeed.<sup>56</sup>

In contrast to 'Caffer Song' (1824), where the 'Caffer' is a pastoral swain, and 'The Caffer Commando' where he and his people are innocent victims, this sonnet levels the playing field. Both 'Caffer' and 'colonist' eye each other greedily from opposite sides of the frontier. The poem appears just after Thompson expressed the hope that the Caffers would soon be converted by missionaries (p. 168). Pringle

<sup>54</sup> Calder, p. 9.

<sup>55</sup> Pringle printed the poem in the *Oriental Herald*, 12 (January 1827), p. 70, just after *Thompson's Travels* had been published. It appeared several pages after his first article of the 'Caffer Frontier' series. Pereira and Chapman, p. 111, claim that it was printed in the *Oriental Herald*, 2 (April-June 1827), which is clearly incorrect.

<sup>56</sup> *Thompson's Travels*, vol. 1, p. 168.

complicates this hope by questioning the motives of all 'Christians' who wish to convert the Caffers, another subversion of Thompson's text.

The sonnet 'The Bushman' carries a similar message regarding the nature of Christians, except that the statement made in the final couplet that Christians are fiends is supposedly made by the Bushman himself, whereas the other two sonnets are spoken by an outraged reformer, that is, Pringle:

#### The Bushman

The Bushman sleeps within his black-brow'd den,  
In the lone wilderness: around him lie  
His wife and little ones unfearingly -  
For they are far away from "Christian men."  
5 No herds, loud lowing, call him down the glen;  
He fears no foe but famine; and may try  
To wear away the hot noon slumberingly;  
Then rise to search for roots - and dance again. -  
But he shall dance no more! His secret lair,  
10 Surrounded, echoes to the thundering gun,  
And the wild shriek of anguish and despair!  
He dies - yet, ere life's ebbing sands are run,  
Leaves to his sons a curse, should they be friends  
With the proud Christian race - "for they are fiends!"<sup>57</sup>

Pringle's 'Bushman Song' (1825) was written after he had called out a commando against them, but before any were slaughtered. In that poem, the Bushman was defiant. Here, he and his family are murdered while sleeping peacefully. This is a frank admission of the extermination of the Bushmen on the frontier, and the Christian race is blamed directly.

These three poems are amongst the most outspoken and politically unreserved which Pringle ever wrote, and highlight the increasing steeling of his passionate disapproval of colonial oppression. In the context of *Thompson's Travels*, which

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<sup>57</sup> *Thompson's Travels*, vol. 2, p. 6. In 1834 Pringle changed the final line to read 'With the proud "Christian-Men" - for they are fiends!'

actively advocates further colonisation of the Cape, they serve as powerful moral injunctions against the manner in which colonialism was often practised. Consequently, they provide moral guidelines for the way it should be conducted in the future.

## 5.2: Poetry in the *Oriental Herald*

By early 1827, with the publication of *Thompson's Travels*, it appears that Pringle had found a new purpose for his poetry. The intimately personal sense of despair and hopelessness which had dominated much of his early South African poetry had vanished. Most of his work since 'Makanna's Gathering/War Song of Lynx' had a political message and was frequently used rhetorically to add colour and poignancy to his politicised journalism. As editor of the *Oriental Herald*, Pringle also had an opportunity to extend his reputation as a poet in Britain.

The poetry Pringle produced during the years 1825-1827 is chiefly characterised by impassioned railing against colonial injustices. It is notable, however, that Pringle gradually began to explore other aspects of his African experience once he had left the colony (as well as broader topics) in the *Oriental Herald* from 1827.<sup>58</sup> For instance, the sonnet 'O Cape of Storms!' is a retrospective piece in which Pringle acknowledges the ties of friendship which bind him to the Cape, even though he knows of its

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58 Apart from a few poems concerning slavery, which will be discussed in chapter six, Pringle published two poems about love in the *Oriental Herald* during 1827. 'Song' (September 1827), p. 486, is an air about married love, set to a Gaelic tune, which asserts that the bonds of true love grow stronger in times of trouble, even though 'Dreams of fame and grandeur / [...] End in bitter tears;' (Lines 17-18). The other 'song' - 'The Lady-Well Tree' (May 1827), p. 304, is dated 'Indian Ocean February 1826.' Stanzas 4 and 5 are the closest Pringle ever comes to being erotic or sexually suggestive in his poetry:

- 20           And the mossy Nine-Well Stone,  
               Where I met my love alone,  
       Like some bright blue-eyed fay of the fountains,  
               Musing 'neath the milk-white thorn,  
               While the young moon's yellow horn  
       Slowly tower'd o'er our pine-tufted mountains!
- 25           Ah! those tearful eyes of blue,  
               When we look'd our last adieu,  
       And her soft timid arms first entwined me!  
               Ah! that virgin lip so chaste -  
               And the tender trembling waist -
- 30           And the fond breast I then left behind me!



'physical and moral ill' (line 9), its slavery, exile, 'sin and sorrow and oppression stark' (line 8).<sup>59</sup> The kindred and friends he leaves behind 'render even [its] rocks and deserts dear' (line 12), an admission that South African as well as Scottish scenery had formed a hold on his affections, though chiefly owing to familial ties. 'The Good Missionary' is a portrait of an idealised missionary who seeks no credit for his labours (line 9), but lives his life as an *imitatio Christi*.<sup>60</sup> The adjective 'good' in the title implies that not all missionaries are paradigms of virtue. 'The Lion Hunt',<sup>61</sup> 'notable for its exploitation of Dutch/Afrikaans names and expressions, as well as the galloping rhythms of Scott's "Lochinvar",' stands testimony to Pringle's fascination with that beast.<sup>62</sup> The hunting party is composed both of Boers and Scotsmen, and the poem provides a good example of homo-social bonding on the frontier: 'Now, boys, let us dine, / And talk of our deeds o'er a flask of old wine' (lines 47-48). Pringle, for all his criticism of the Boers, neither despised nor underestimated them, as is evident in the *Narrative*, and in his attempts as co-editor of the *SACA* and *SAJ* to unite Boer and Briton in a common British culture at the Cape.

Although the thematic range of Pringle's poetry shows signs of broadening in the *Oriental Herald*, he found little time to devote to poetry amid his numerous and demanding offices. In March 1827 he became secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society. He was editor of the *Oriental Herald*, wrote copious articles on the Cape, and by the end of 1827 he had become editor of the annual *Friendship's Offering*. On 19 May 1827 he wrote to James Hogg saying 'as for myself I am at present so engrossed with

59 *Oriental Herald* (February 1827), p. 216.

60 *Oriental Herald*, 13 (April 1827), p. 48.

61 *Oriental Herald* (December 1827), pp. 469 - 470.

62 Pereira and Chapman, p. 93. This poem was not first published in *Ephemerides* (1828) contrary to Pereira and Chapman's suggestion.

my official duties as secretary of the "abolitionists" that I know no leisure for literary labours.'<sup>63</sup> Even so, in 1828, Pringle produced two substantial poetical publications.

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<sup>63</sup> Pringle to Hogg, NLS 2245. f. 100.

### 5.3: *Ephemerides* and *Glen-Lynden*

*Ephemerides, Or Occasional Poems, written in Scotland and South Africa* is Pringle's attempt to collect poetry from two different periods of his life into one volume.<sup>64</sup> The book is divided into two parts, 'the first comprising all the Author's earlier compositions in verse which he considers worth reprinting; the second, a series of more recent Sketches, written in a remote colony, and under circumstances somewhat peculiar.'<sup>65</sup> Because Pringle stresses the distinction between the two groups of poetry, it is worth considering the nature of his distinction.

Firstly, Pringle divides the poetry into the categories 'earlier / not a remote colony' and 'more recent / a remote colony.' There is a distinction made both in terms of time and place. These categories have an obvious rationale in terms of Pringle's biography, except that he is not being strictly honest with regard to them. The 'early' section consists mostly of poems from *The Autumnal Excursion*, yet it also contains other poems, one, 'The Lady-Well Tree' (p. 63) written as recently as 1826 on the 'Indian Ocean'.<sup>66</sup> The 'South African' section contains several poems written after 1825 in London, and two, 'On the restoration of Despotism in Spain' (p. 136) and 'Slavery' (p. 147) contain no direct references to South Africa. It appears, therefore, that though time and place of composition are vital for making the distinction, form and content also have a role to play. In other words, Pringle links certain poems to South Africa because of their political content and style, others to Scotland because of their romantic content and style. Secondly, Pringle distinguishes between poems 'worth' reprinting, and poems produced under 'peculiar circumstances', most of which, though he does

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<sup>64</sup> Published by Smith, Elder: London, 1828.

<sup>65</sup> Preface to *Ephemerides*.

<sup>66</sup> Another is 'Dearest love! believe me' (p. 69) written in September 1827, a love song, probably addressed to Pringle's wife.

not mention it, had been printed before. The implication is that the 'South African' poems are worth reprinting precisely because of the circumstances which produced them, and the rest because they have some other, unspecified, value. In this context, the Latin couplet affixed to the 'Scottish' section is telling:

*Nescio qua natale solum dulcedine Musas  
Ducit, et immemores non sinit esse sui*  
(Ovid. Epist.)<sup>67</sup>

The literal translation of Pringle's quotation is: 'I do not know by what charm a birth-soil [native country] draws the muses, and does not allow (them) to be forgetful of it' (my translation). Pringle, therefore, admits that his poetic inspiration can never forget or ignore Scotland, even if he does not know why. As a Scot, he is still capable of writing poetry which fits easily into the 'Scottish' section, but his muses have to be drawn to his native land from another country. In the 'South African' section they are otherwise occupied. This is, in part, reflected in the sonnet to Sir Walter Scott which prefaces the second section, 'Poems written in South Africa.'<sup>68</sup>

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67 Ovid, *Epistulae ex Ponto* 1.3.35-36. The verse should read 'Nescio qua natale solum dulcedine cunctos / ducit, et immemores esse sui.' ('By some sort of charm their birth-soil draws all men (sc. to her) and does not permit them to forget her.') No variant 'Musas' is given, though a large number of MSS have 'captos'. Ovid was banished by Augustus to Tomis on the Black Sea, at that stage on the outskirts of the Roman empire. Though Ovid eventually died there, after unsuccessfully petitioning Augustus and Nero with these poetic letters (amongst other writings), Pringle must have seen, even if humorously, a parallel between Ovid and himself, writing several letters to the Commissioners of Enquiry, etc. I would like to thank Mr. C. Chandler, Department of Classics, University of Cape Town, for locating the variants of the couplet above.

68 See the discussion of *Glen-Lynden* below.

From deserts wild and many a pathless wood  
 Of savage climes where I have wandered long,  
 Whose hills and streams are yet ungraced by song,  
 I bring, illustrious bard, this garland rude:  
 5 The offering, though uncouth, in kindly mood  
 Thou wilt regard, if haply there should be,  
 'Mong meaner things, the flower simplicity,  
 Fresh from young Nature's virgin solitude.<sup>69</sup>

Although Pringle says that his garland is 'rude' and 'uncouth', that is, not as ornately 'literary' as it might have been, his claim that he is bringing 'fresh' flowers to be hung around the neck of Scotland's most popular author is bold. Metaphorically, he is introducing exotic hybrids into the Scottish literary tradition. Chiefly, he offers the fresh 'flower simplicity', which could imply that Scotland's variety is a little wilted.

A closer understanding of what Pringle meant by 'simplicity' can be obtained by contrasting two sets of similar poems in the Scottish and South African sections.

The first set is 'Evening Rambles' and the early poem, the 'Autumnal Excursion'.<sup>70</sup> Both are discursive, prospect poems, in which the narrator muses over particular landscapes, Glen-Lynden on the Cape frontier, and Teviotdale in Scotland respectively. In the 'Autumnal Excursion', the narrator's aim is to produce 'pictured relics of the past' (line 13), using the scenery to trigger memories of the region's history, and of his own childhood. The only substantial figure to appear in the landscape is a shepherd (lines 482-501). The narrator describes the shepherd's

69 *Ephemerides*, p. 84. Pringle's 'Caffer Song' (1824) is an adaptation of a Xhosa song. His claim that the country's hills and stream are 'ungraced by song' is, therefore, meant in the colonial/imperialist sense of western lyric metres.

70 *Ephemerides*, pp. 103-111 and 3-36 respectively. Pringle dated 'Evening Rambles' to 'Glen-Lynden, 1822' in *African Sketches* (1834). 'A Noon-Day Dream' was dated 'Caffer Frontier, 1825' in *Ephemerides*, and changed to 'River Koonap, 1825' in *African Sketches*. There is no need to take Pringle at his word, however, as he often changed the date of his writings to suit his purposes, and there is no mention of these two poems in letters to Fairbairn written around 1825. This is not proof in itself, but Pringle tended to discuss all the poems he wrote on the frontier in his letters to Fairbairn, even if only in passing. For my discussion of the 'Autumnal Excursion', see chapter two.

'homelier tale', however, rather than the shepherd himself. All these musings open up 'Imagination's paradise' (line 517). The conclusion of the poem is that the 'Scenes and Friends of Early Years' are endearing and 'sacred' (lines 583-584).<sup>71</sup>

In contrast, the scenery in 'Evening Rambles' (which is contrasted with Teviotdale) gives the narrator the opportunity to consider three figures, the deceased 'Bushman' (lines 55-60), the 'swart Shepherd' (lines 99-112), and the Bechuan 'Neat-herd' (lines 113-122). The figures represent the different phases brought upon them by colonial oppression and slavery.<sup>72</sup> The shepherd, who is contrasted with a Scottish counterpart, is a slave. He has reached the lowest rung of the ladder of physical and moral degradation, above death. This state has deprived him of hope, as well as of music and narrative: 'Nor flute has he, nor merry song, / Nor book nor tale nor rustic lay' (lines 107-107). Slavery has denied him the Scottish shepherd's 'homelier tale'. Bunn claims that the effect of these lines is 'not surprisingly, to drain him of life and remove him as a competitive presence from the phenomenological field in which the colonial self, and the colonial eye, is excursive. Moreover, no rival music, oral tradition, or representation is tolerated, and it is only at the expense of this dramatic *elision of all other thought* that the speaker continues his "thoughtful strain" till the end of the poem' [Bunn's italics].<sup>73</sup> We should remember, however, that there were no slaves on the Pringle settlement. Pringle, therefore, has specifically conjured up the 'swart Shepherd', which supports my reading that his intention was to make an abolitionist point. In this context, the similarities pointed out at the beginning of the poem between Scottish and South African scenery have the effect of sharpening the contrast between the way the shepherd is treated in either environment. Furthermore,

71 A similar moralising conclusion occurs in 'Afar in the Desert' (written before Pringle's meeting with Philip) where the narrator finds 'solitude' and closeness to God.

72 See my discussion of Pringle's attitudes towards degradation in chapter six. Bunn has given a close reading of these figures in terms of colonial power and labour relations, pp. 158-163.

73 Bunn, p. 159.



the 'Neat-herd', as a bonded labourer, though a 'naked, homeless exile' (line 120), still bears the 'port of man' (line 121) on his brow, and has a 'tuneless song' (line 114), a fact which Bunn neglects to mention. As a bonded labourer, he is a further step up the ladder, he has a song, even if no tune. Pringle gives or attributes both history, music and a narrative voice to free peoples in, for instance, 'Song of the Wild Bushman', 'Caffer Song' and 'Makanna's Gathering'.

The poem concludes with a mention of the cares of a farmer and the dangers of wild animals. When Pringle returns to his cottage, murmuring his 'thoughtful strain', the poem returns to the domestic space, unlike 'Imagination's paradise' in the 'Autumnal Excursion'. The 'thoughtful strain' invites ongoing reflection in the reader, rather than the closure of the prescriptive, sentimental conclusion given in the 'Autumnal Excursion'. The 'simplicity' of the poem, therefore, is that it invites consideration of the real world, rather than the effect that this world has on the sentimental imagination.

The second set is 'A Noon-Day Dream' and the early poem 'A Dream in Fairyland'.<sup>74</sup> Both use the dream as a vehicle for philosophical musing. 'A Dream in Fairyland' is a lengthy, sentimental journey through an imagined realm. The moral conclusion to the journey is that the poet aspires to find 'Pleasure in the "Joy of Grief"'. In contrast, 'A Noon-Day Dream' commences with a description of African landscape which rapidly gives way to a series of visions, including one of the deity 'Tyranny' (line 79).<sup>75</sup> Though the portrait of 'Tyranny' may have been inspired by Lord Charles Somerset, Pringle makes no explicit link between the two, but rather considers the effects of tyranny and slavery in the world at large. The poem, then, is not specifically 'African', though it does locate Africa as a place from which a poet

<sup>74</sup> *Ephemerides*, pp. 128-135 and 37-41 respectively.

<sup>75</sup> See Pope's 'Epilogue to the Satires', Dialogue 1, lines 145-172, *Alexander Pope's Collected Poems*, ed. with introduction by Bonamy Dobrée (London: Dent, 1969), p. 329.

may cast a moral judgement on the world. In this poem, on the banks of an isolated stream on the frontier, Pringle turns his dreaming gaze towards England and conjures up a vivid image of its corruption:

95       As I drew near 'mid the suppliant train,  
           My heart swelled high with grief and pain,  
           Proud England's children there to view,  
           Commingle with that crouching crew;  
           And I marvelled that no manly hand  
           Was raised to redeem the desolate land

The vision is then shattered by 'a crashing stroke, / As when the red lightning shivers the rock' (lines 103-104). There is no indication as to what may have caused the stroke, but one possible interpretation is that it is the crashing stroke of Pringle's own pen in his fight against tyranny. This reading is not untenable since Pringle, unusually, expresses disappointment with the poets and sages whom he had earlier admired:

50       A proud ancient city with palaces crown'd  
           Where statesmen and heroes seem'd passing along,  
           With poets and sages - a glorious throng!  
           I heard from on high the loud heralds proclaim  
           With silver-toned voice each patriot name;  
           I marked, yet afar, their mild dignified mien,  
           And their aspect, benevolent, simple, serene;  
           And lingered, in heart-greeting silence to gaze  
           On the faces of some I had loved in their lays.  
           - But these feelings were brief; for, as closer they came,  
       60       Their bearing and looks seem'd no longer the same;  
           And features, that distance had softened or veil'd,  
           Grew harsh and distinct, till I shudder'd and quail'd -  
           Disturb'd with dark thoughts, like the heavings of ocean,  
           When it feels, amid calm, the far-coming commotion!<sup>76</sup>

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76 Pringle's rhetoric is even more trenchant and incisive in the *African Sketches* version of 1834:

60       - But suddenly out-burst a boisterous crowd  
           Of maskers and rhapsodists, railing aloud,  
           And scattering brands in their frantic mirth,  
           As if lewd love of mischief had called them forth:  
           And the burthen and boast of their scurrilous song

As his gaze brings British bards into focus, he becomes aware of their seeming hypocrisy. Pringle implies, therefore, that the poet has a moral duty towards society, which, he claims, most of his fellow poets were ignoring. With this in mind, we can make some sense of the title *Ephemerides*. An 'Ephemeris' is a diary or notebook. *Ephemerides*, therefore, are notes, sketches, indeed, poems that are 'occasional', as the extended title of the book tells us. If the 'early/Scottish' works are 'worth' repeating for their poetic quality, then the rude garland of African poems are there because it was Pringle's moral duty to write about occasional current affairs in a 'simple' rather than a 'fanciful' manner.

It is the very 'occasional' nature of Pringle's 'South African' poems which gives him the opportunity to describe the events or circumstances which inspired them. Over half the text of *Ephemerides* consists of footnotes to the poems; footnotes which continue Pringle's campaign against injustice at the Cape. The footnotes themselves are small essays, often modifications of Pringle's longer journalism, as with the notes on Makanna (pp. 178-186) which are drawn from his article in the *New Monthly Magazine*.<sup>77</sup> The 'African' poems are intimately related to the real and contemporary context which produced them, and Pringle makes this close relation plain.<sup>78</sup> Thus, in *Ephemerides*, Pringle's 'African' poetry can be seen as having become an established and valuable component of his poetical as well as political project.

Nowhere, however, is Pringle's new allegiance to fighting injustice in poetry more clearly stated than in *Glen-Lynden: A Tale of Teviotdale*.<sup>79</sup> Pringle claims to have

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Was to scoff at the Right and applaud the Wrong.

<sup>77</sup> *New Monthly Magazine*, 19 (1827), 69-76.

<sup>78</sup> This makes Brink's ahistorical 'new critical' approach to Pringle's poetry all the more inappropriate.

<sup>79</sup> Thomas Pringle, *Glen-Lynden: A Tale of Teviotdale* (Smith, Elder: London), 1828.

written most of the poem in 1824 while at Genadendal. This seems likely, as the first sections show none of the political awareness which came to characterise Pringle's subsequent poetry. The poem opens with a farewell address to 'Sweet Teviot! by adventurous Leyden sung' (line 1) and continues with a pseudo-autobiographical tale which shows 'clear parallels with the story of Pringle's own family.'<sup>80</sup> This, the main part of the poem, ends abruptly when the emigrants leave Britain, and the song 'Our native Land - our native Vale' is added, which had already been printed in 1825 by Allan Cunningham in *Songs of Scotland Ancient and Modern*. It is probable that Pringle stopped at this point in the poem when he left Genadendal, intending to continue with the story of his family at a later date. When the poem was finally published in 1828, Pringle says that it was 'not likely to be resumed' by him. Also, the final stanzas, inserted at the end of the poem are entirely different in tone and theme from the rest, suggesting that they were written at a later date:

Sweet Teviot, fare thee well. Less gentle themes  
 Abruptly call me from thy pastoral vale,  
 To where far Amakosa's woods and streams  
 Spread faint before me in the moonlight pale,  
 And from deep wildering dells I hear the wail  
 Of broken hearts - the mother and the child:  
 How can I dally with a lover's tale,  
 In Fiction's bowers - while peals in anguish wild  
 To heaven the bitter cry of Afric's race reviled?

- 10 From Keissi's meads, from Chumi's hoary woods,  
 Bleak Tarka's dens, and Stormberg's rugged fells,  
 To where Gariep pours down his sounding floods  
 Through regions where the hunted Bushman dwells,  
 And, like a spirit's voice, demands the song  
 That of these savage haunts the story tells -  
 A tale of foul oppression, fraud and wrong,  
 By Afric's sons endured from Christian Europe long.

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80 Pereira and Chapman, p. 133. Leyden is termed 'adventurous' as he had left Scotland for India.

20       Adieu, soft lays to love and fancy dear:  
           Let darker themes a sterner verse inspire,  
           While I attune to strains that tyrants fear  
           The louder murmurs of the British lyre, -  
           And from a loftier altar ask the fire  
           To point the indignant line with heavenly light,  
           (Though soon again in darkness to expire!)  
           That I may blast Oppression's cruel might,  
           By flashing TRUTH'S full blaze on deeds deep hid in night!<sup>81</sup>

Firstly, it is notable that the introduction of 'less gentle themes' into the poet's work is viewed by Pringle as being 'abrupt' (line 2), which tallies with my argument that Pringle underwent a rapid and sudden poetical and political awakening in 1825. Secondly, although Pringle is aware that to 'dally with a lover's tale, / In Fiction's bowers' (lines 7-8) is what is expected of him as a poet, he claims that he is morally and emotionally unable to fit this mould. Thirdly, Pringle displays great awareness as to the nature of his subject matter: 'A tale of foul oppression, fraud and wrong, / By Afric's sons endured from Christian Europe long.' Pringle is, therefore, no longer a fanciful Romantic poet or a poet of the landscape, as many have seen him, but a medium for expressing the 'bitter cry' which swells over that landscape. The hunted Bushman (killed in Pringle's commando) 'like a spirit's voice' uses Pringle, literally as a medium, to tell his story. Fourthly, Pringle uses the 'British lyre', thus remaining a British poet, though fully aware that he is playing this lyre to accompany a very different song. Finally, Pringle recognises that by using his poetry to expose deeds which are dark and clandestine, the lines themselves will soon expire in darkness. The 'deeds deep hid in night' which Pringle will describe are indeed ephemeral, but

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81 This text is taken from an abridged version of the poem in *Friendship's Offering* (1829), 19-35 (pp. 32-35). These three stanzas, which appear at the end of the original and the *Friendship's Offering* version, were moved by Ritchie, in 1838, to the front of the poem, where they are called 'Introductory Stanza'. This is clearly inappropriate as they introduce the latter part of the poem which was never written. Pereira and Chapman, unfortunately, do the same. I have, nevertheless, used Pereira and Chapman's line numbers for ease of reference, even though the text of the verses they print differs substantially from the original text which is quoted here.

Pringle, nevertheless, has made his resolve to uncover and illuminate them at the expense of personal fame as a poet.

Pringle's decision not to write popular verse greatly reduced his income. As he says in a letter to James Hogg of *Ephemerides*: 'It has been favourably [reviewed by] most of the periodicals - but like all my [~~destroyed~~] does not sell well,' though it gained him introductions to several well known poets like Rogers.<sup>82</sup> Moreover, Pringle's salary at the Anti-Slavery Society was not enough to sustain him and his family, and so he was led to accept the editorship of the annual *Friendship's Offering*.<sup>83</sup>

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82 Pringle to Hogg, NLS 2245.ff.118. 22 May 1828. Pringle maintained a correspondence with both Scott and Hogg. Though he obviously admired them personally, he shows occasionally in his letters that he opposes their politics. See Pringle to Hogg, Bunhill Row, 19 May 1827, NLS 2245.f.100. See also Pringle to Scott, October 1821, NLS 3895.f.201, where he makes it plain that he is a Whig. Scott himself found Pringle 'worthy' but 'conceited withal,' '[h]e might have done well there, could he have scoured his brain of politics, but he must needs publish a Whig journal at the Cape of Good Hope.' *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott*, new edition (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1891), 23 October 1826, p. 282.

83 *Friendship's Offering*, ed. by Thomas Pringle (London: Smith, Elder, 1828-1835). The 1835 edition was released posthumously. The editor before 1828 was Leitch Ritchie, who wrote Pringle's first biography. Ritchie said of Pringle that 'he was never, at any period of his life, a mere author; literature with him was inseparably connected with the practical amelioration of the human race; it was the armour he assumed in the great struggle for civilisation,' in Meiring, p. 137.



#### 5.4: *Friendship's Offering*

Pringle's editorship of *Friendship's Offering* gave him another opportunity (as with the *Oriental Herald*) to popularise his own poetry, though the tenor of poems he published initially was constrained by the nature of the annual. He reveals his attitude towards all the Annuals which were then so popular in another letter to Hogg:

But now, in regard to the poem you have sent me I will tell you frankly my sentiments after a careful perusal. It is full of wild originality & bold striking imagery - but altogether it seems to me too strange & droll, & "high Kilted" for the very "gentle" publication now under my charge. [...] For these "douce" & delicate publications, the Annuals, I think it rather inappropriate. You will probably think me over fastidious and "mim-mon'd" - and it may probably be true I am too nice. But you will allow that in books designed chiefly for young persons that is the best side to err on. Not that I think there is anything in this poem of an immoral tendency - far from it. All your works that I am acquainted with show, on the contrary, that no one detests any thing licentious more truly - but in elegant publications of this description I think it ought to be a rule [...] to admit not a single expression which would call up a blush in the cheek of the most delicate female if reading aloud to a mixt company.<sup>84</sup>

Pringle obviously enjoyed Hogg's poem, but was exercising his own form of moral censorship with regard to the Annual because of its young and 'gentle' audience.<sup>85</sup> Unfortunately, we do not know the content or title of Hogg's poem, but it seems more than likely from Pringle's comments that it contained a sexual theme. Part of the requirement for a "'douce' & delicate publication', then, was that it should not be risqué, whether Pringle enjoyed this sort of poem or not. The question arises, however, as to whether Pringle wished to exclude all material that was provocative or

84 Pringle to Hogg, NLS 2245.ff.122, 28 May 1828. This has elements of Pringle 'anticipating Dickens's Podsnap by nearly 40 years' as Calder suggests, p. 205. Pringle's own attitude to *Friendship's Offering*, however, which complicates Calder's suggestion, will be discussed below.

85 Pringle's use of quotation marks around gentle may imply that he had his own opinion on the subject.

disturbing in order to keep the annual 'gentle', as he desired. This can be judged from his own contributions to the magazine.

His first two contributions to the 1828 edition are the poems 'A Noon-Day Dream' (pp. 24-28), and an abridged version of *Glen-Lynden* (pp. 19-35). Both are noticeably poems which are slightly fanciful, yet nevertheless return the reader to scenes of injustice and wrong in the real world at the end. It appears, therefore, that by printing these two poems in particular, which question the usefulness of 'Fiction's bowers', Pringle was making a gentle stab at the very stuff of the Annuals, which was a combination of sentiment and fancy.

A startling example of Pringle's inversion of a fanciful scene is to be found in the poem 'La Frescura' which appears in the same number (pp. 357-359).<sup>86</sup> The poem is headed by an engraving of an idyllic pastoral scene in Italy.<sup>87</sup> As expected, the poem opens with a description of the scene which is correspondingly idyllic. However, the poetic narrative rapidly moves along to describe the fate of the exiles from Naples, Portugal and Spain then being washed up 'like sea-weed' on British shores. Afterwards, Pringle appeals for support, especially financial, from Britons, and then directs his entreaties to the 'ladies of our land' in particular. A year later, in March 1829, Pringle sent a circular to James Hogg, signed by Thomas Campbell, requesting free poems for a volume for the relief of Spanish and Italian refugees, which, Pringle said, he was 'engaged in promoting [...] as a coadjutor of Campbell's.'<sup>88</sup> It is uncertain whether this was Campbell's or Pringle's idea, but the fact is that a year previously, Pringle had deliberately used one of his poems as a means of collecting

86 Called 'The Refugees' in Hay, pp. 115-118.

87 Many of the poems in *Friendship's Offering* and other annuals were headed by engravings. It was often Pringle's practice to receive an engraving, and then to write or commission a poem to accompany it. For instance, he writes to Hogg on 28 May 1828 to ask him for a poem to be called 'The Minstrel Boy' to accompany a plate of a young shepherd with pipes in hand. Pringle to Hogg, NLS 2245.ff.122.

88 Pringle to Hogg, NLS 2245.ff.143, 9 March 1829.

money for that cause. Even a 'gentle' publication, therefore, could be used for political purposes.<sup>89</sup>

Yet, even though Pringle did use *Friendship's Offering*, where possible, to increase public awareness about certain issues, his promise to abandon 'soft lays to love and fancy dear' in 'Glen-Lynden' was circumscribed by the nature of the annual, and it is in this context that many of his contributions should be read. In the 1829 edition, for instance, alongside 'Glen-Lynden' and 'La Frescura', the poems 'A Cabinet Picture' (p. 92) and 'The Highlands' (p. 360) appear. The first, which occurs as 'A Graceful Form, A Gentle Mien' in Hay (p. 146) was written for an engraving and is entirely fanciful, even though Pringle vainly tries to deny it in the last stanza: 'This gentle portraiture to frame / Required not FANCY'S art: / But do not ask the lady's name - / 'Tis hidden in my heart' (lines 13-16). Pringle was forced to write more of these poems for engravings than he enjoyed, as he admitted in a letter to Fairbairn concerning the 1830 edition: 'I have more of my own poetry in the volume than I contemplated - having been obliged to write several pieces on the spur of the moment for plates &c.'<sup>90</sup>

'The Highlands' is a Scottish song, in the vernacular, which expresses the poet's longing to be there. The insertion of this poem is explained, in part, by Pringle's attempt to make the annual as 'Scottish' as possible. He wanted to make his volume 'predominantly Scotch by enlisting if possible all Scottish writers of distinguished

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89 Pringle published another poem relating to the wars in Europe in the *Friendship's Offering* for 1831, p. 327. This poem, however, which Campbell had published in his *New Monthly Magazine* (1829), p. 254, is a rather uninteresting rallying call to the Spaniards. Campbell probably found favour with it as it is in strict imitation of his own style, a style which Pringle had attempted to imitate before 1820 in 'To the Poet Campbell' and 'Sir Thomas Graham'. The only 'African' touch in the poem are the lines: 'Though Despair and Famine gaunt / Like hyænas round you howl' (lines 23-24).

90 FB:I:138A, 25 August 25 1829.

talent as contributors.'<sup>91</sup> Three types of Pringle's poems may, therefore, be distinguished in *Friendship's Offering*: poems with a Scottish interest, poems with a South African interest, and poems Pringle was required to write at short notice to fill the annual.<sup>92</sup>

In the 1830 edition, Pringle's 'African' contributions were 'The Bechuana Boy' (pp. 30-36) and 'African Woodlands' (p. 287). Given Pringle's earlier comments about the class of readers to whom 'The Bechuana Boy' would be suited (see chapter four), it is no surprise that he chose to insert it in *Friendship's Offering*. Pringle was fully aware of the influence that the pathos of the poem could have on his readers, as he admits to an unknown, young (possibly female) correspondent in a letter of 29 August 1829:

I am not a little pleased that you like my 'Bechuana Boy'. Your own and your mother's tears are tributes which I highly prize; not from any particular vanity in regard to this little piece, but because it satisfies me that my aim to attain the simple language of truth and nature has not been entirely unsuccessful. Condensation and simplicity are now my great aims in any poetical attempts, for without these I am satisfied that nothing I may write will live - or deserve to live - and many of my early pieces are very deficient, especially in the former of these qualities.<sup>93</sup>

It is important to note that Pringle did not write any new 'African' poems for *Friendship's Offering* between 1828 and 1832, possibly because the tenor of his later

91 Pringle in Meiring, p. 136.

92 The phrase 'required to write' refers to ordinary editorial demands, and does not imply that the annual lacked contributors or was unpopular. Indeed, by 1829, *Friendship's Offering* was already established as one of the most popular annuals and was selling in excess of seven thousand copies per year. Pringle had the confidence to boast in the prologue to the 1830 edition, spoken by the Annual herself, that she 'b[ore] the bell' in comparison with the others. She says, though, that she does not begrudge the other annuals as she would 'teach our offspring to inherit / A generous RIVALSHIP IN MERIT.' p. vii.

93 In Pereira and Chapman, p. 78. Pringle had recognised that 'condensation' and 'simplicity' were the best way to communicate his political message, but also that these pieces 'deserve' posthumous fame.

poems would simply not have been appropriate to it.<sup>94</sup> The poem 'African Woodlands' is the fourth stanza of 'The Desolate Valley', first published in *African Sketches* in 1834. 'African Scenery', the third stanza of the same poem, appeared in *Friendship's Offering* for 1832. Both of these stanzas contain nothing of the violence of the rest of the poem. This illustrates, once again, Pringle's hesitation to insert anything too disturbing into his annual. As they appear here, the verses are nothing more than judicious space-fillers.

The incidental poems in the 1830 edition are 'A Poet's Favourite' (pp. 39-40), 'Lines Written in an Album' (pp. 347-348), and 'Spoleto' (pp. 109-111). 'Spoleto' was written for an engraving. The poet Rogers, who had visited Spoleto, had allowed Pringle to quote from his 'travelling note book' in the introduction to the poem. It is worth mentioning because Pringle displays his irritation at being forced to write such a piece. He calls it an 'idle strain' and then dismisses the poem almost entirely:

So rose the scene on Roger's [sic] classic eye -  
And thus, embalmed in words that ne'er could die,  
Its touching image had remained enshrined,  
50 Had he to verse transferred it from his mind.  
Far other fate awaits this rustic lay,  
Framed for the passing purpose of a day:  
Enough for me if its tone commend  
Whom 'tis a pride and grace to call my Friend.

'Lines Written in An Album' is another incidental poem which merits attention. This poem is notable since it illustrates a growing moralising rhetoric which begins to appear in some of the poetry Pringle wrote for *Friendship's Offering*. This particular poem represents a lady's album as an emblem of human life, until the book is

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<sup>94</sup> The original version of 'The Bechuana Boy' alluded to in a letter of Pringle to Fairbairn, FB:I:98, October 12, 1825, does not survive.

'Scribbled closely to the end - / Without a space to mar or mend' (p. 348). Elsewhere, he includes short poems about illness and approaching death (all with a moralising tone) such as 'The Cloud' (1832, p. 101), 'A Hymn' (1833, p. 105), and 'Inscription' (1833, pp. 106-107). There can be little doubt that these poems were inspired by Pringle's own ill-health, but also that they were written for the purposes of filling gaps in a fanciful annual which increasingly frustrated him. Pringle felt that he could not be too provocative in his annual, which could explain why his own, minor contributions became increasingly religious and didactic, rather than merely entertaining. This is evidenced by his admission in the preface for 1831 that there was a 'moral' element [Pringle's own word] to his editorial policy, and, a year later, that his aim was 'combining simplicity of style with elevation of sentiment.'<sup>95</sup> This policy became the guiding principle of most annuals and easily led to the rather saccharine and sentimental annuals which gained such popularity later in Victorian England.<sup>96</sup> It is appropriate that of the five specifically religious poems written by Pringle, four appear in *Friendship's Offering*. These poems are 'Our Neighbour' (1831, p. 22), 'Memento' (1831, p. 104), 'The Twenty-Third Psalm (a paraphrase)' (1832, pp. 285-6), and 'The Christian Warfare' (1833, p. 286).<sup>97</sup> Of these, 'Our Neighbour' contains a similar, acerbic rhetoric as the sonnets 'The Hottentot', 'The Caffer', and 'The Bushman' in *Thompson's Travels*.

<sup>95</sup> Preface to *Friendship's Offering*, 1832.

<sup>96</sup> See Anne Renier, *Friendship's Offering* (London: Private Libraries Association, 1964). This short pamphlet traces the origin and development of the annuals in Britain.

<sup>97</sup> The fifth religious poem, 'When Morn Awakes our Hearts' appears in Hay, pp. 153-154.



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## Our Neighbour

Luke X. 29.

"Who is my neighbour?" - SELFISHNESS replies,  
 "The man who best can aid your steps to rise;  
 The powerful - for whose favour all contend;  
 The wealthy - who may prove a useful friend;  
 5 The fashionable - whose notice is a grace;  
 In short, whoe'er is forward in the race  
 Of worldly honour. Such as lag behind,  
 The poor, th'oppressed, the wretched of mankind, -  
 If you are prudent, from their presence fly -  
 Leave them to PROVIDENCE, and pass them by."

The Scottish contributions, on the contrary, show Pringle at his most lenient and congenial. In the 1830 edition we have 'The Spaewife' (pp. 377-380),<sup>98</sup> a poem written for an engraving. Pringle's lively portrait of this woman derives from his own experience.<sup>99</sup> Apart from the local detail surrounding the description of Madge, she also gives Pringle the opportunity to comment (albeit anachronistically) on the dissolution of the clans and old, pre-industrial life in Scotland. Madge voices a sentiment commonly expressed by nostalgic characters in Scott's early novels: 'But times are changed, Och! weel I trow, / Kin are grown fremd - and blood's but water now!' (p. 379). Pringle, however, admits that such nostalgia is inappropriate as the world has progressed, and blames it on the foibles of his own advancing age: 'Comparing the dull present with the past, / The afternoon of life seems overcast, - / Not that the sun his brightness has withdrawn, / But we have lost the freshness of our

98 'A gypsy palm reader'.

99 Pringle's note: 'Madge the Spaewife is not a sketch from fancy, but from real life --- although the author has in some respects blended the features of two gipsies of this name and vocation, who were well known to him in his boyhood. The elder of these was Madge Gordon (grand-daughter of the famous Jean Gordon, the prototype of Meg Merriles), of whom a description was given in the first number of Blackwood's Magazine, which has recently had the honour of being quoted by Sir Walter Scott in his interesting introduction to the tale of *Guy Mannering*, in the new edition of the *Waverly novels*.'

Scott did not acknowledge Pringle's contribution in *Guy Mannering*. Pringle, here, gently reminds the readers that he was the author whose work was being 'honoured'.

dawn' (p. 379). He then 'remembers' how Madge had once told his fortune when he was a lad, and analyses the outcome:

- 'Tis thirty years since, near that very spot,  
Just where the stream sweeps round old Elshie's cot,  
70 Madge stopped me at the ford to spae my lot;  
And, poring o'er my palm with earnest look,  
Said that my name should be in printed book;  
For I (a scape-grace then some nine years old)  
Should travel to far lands, and gather gold;  
Should be a scholar - wed a 'gentle bride' -  
And build a castle fair on Teviot's side:  
"And this shall sooth betide," quoth black-browed Madge,  
"Ere nine times thrice the haw grows on the hedge."
- My Sibyl's *spae-wierd*, like Pelides' prayer,  
80 Was half fulfilled, half lost in empty air:  
I grew a scholar - *such* as Madge foretold;  
Became a traveller - but caught no gold;  
Was wedded - but (thank Heaven!) with happier fate  
Than to be matched with a patrician mate,  
Though here my fortune, faithful to the letter,  
Failing the gipsy's meaning, found a better.  
- But, castle-building! - that has been my joy,  
In all my wanderings ever since a boy;  
Not in the Greek or Gothic style restored,  
90 Or on Sir Walter's plan at Abbotsford, -  
But, scorning line and plummet, rule and square,  
I build ('tis most convenient) in the air!

In this poem we see Pringle as the genial fireside poet (see chapter two), enjoying himself unaffectedly, and entertaining the reader at the same time. The poem contributes to the distinctly Scottish flavour of the annual (which Pringle desired), but such 'idle strains' are rare in Pringle's poetic oeuvre after 1824, which is dominated by the poetry he felt politically and morally obliged to produce.<sup>100</sup>

100 Other 'Scottish' poems include 'The Accepted' (1831, p. 135) - written for an engraving, and one of Pringle's rare poems in dialect - and 'The Flowers of Teviotdale' (1831, pp. 156-158). In the latter, a Scottish woman, who is the wife of a colonist in Malabar, urges him to return: 'Leave India's dear-bought dross behind / To such as prize it more: / Ah what can India's lacs of gold / To withered hearts avail? / Then haste thee, love, ere hope wax cold, / And hie to Teviotdale.' Pringle seldom wastes an opportunity to hint at colonial exploitation. This poem seems to have been influenced by John Leyden's 'To a Gold Rupee'.

Pringle was increasingly irritated by his 'pretty picture book', and was not satisfied, as he told an unknown female correspondent, to devote even his leisure time to the 'mere entertainment of the lovers of light literature.'<sup>101</sup> As the annual became increasingly popular and stable as a financial venture, however, so Pringle's contributions became more provocative. In 1833 he published his article called 'The Wrongs of Amakosa' (pp. 80-89), which was based on his hard-hitting articles on the 'Caffer Frontier' in the *Oriental Herald* years before.<sup>102</sup> His narrative of oppression, deceit and murder of the Xhosa, and especially the colonial treatment of Makanna, is certainly out of place in a "'douce" and delicate' publication. This article is followed by 'The Captive of Camalú'.<sup>103</sup> Pringle says in *African Sketches* that this poem is 'supposed to express the feelings of some of those Caffers and Ghonaquas converted by the missionary Williams, who, after the devastating wars of 1818, 1819, were forced to become bondmen among the boors [sic], or imprisoned in Robben Island. - see Philip's *Researches*, pp. 190-192':<sup>104</sup>

My brothers too - green Camalú,  
 Repose they by thy quiet tide?  
 Ay! there they sleep - where White Men slew  
 And left them - lying side by side.  
 No pity had those men of pride,  
 30    They fired the huts above the dying! -  
      - White bones bestrew that valley wide -  
      I wish that mine were with them lying! [...]

Oh, wretched fate! - heart-desolate,  
 A captive in the spoiler's hand,  
 To serve the tyrant whom I hate -

<sup>101</sup> In Meiring, p. 143.

<sup>102</sup> *Oriental Herald*, 12 (1827), 12-21, 13 (1827), 9-17.

<sup>103</sup> First published in *The Tourist*, vol. 1 (September-December), 1832. Pringle included another 'African Sketch' in the 1833 edition of *Friendship's Offering* called 'The Tornado'. This was first published in *The Englishman's Magazine*, August 1831, and later in *African Sketches*, where it was dated 'Zitzikamma, 1825.' The fact that the poem is an apolitical tale of a tornado causing a shipwreck suggests that the dating is accurate. Pringle visited the Zitzikamma a few months before his meeting with the Rev. Dr. Philip in 1825.

<sup>104</sup> In Pereira and Chapman, p. 105.

45       To crouch beneath his proud command -  
           Upon my flesh to bear his brand -  
           His blows, his bitter scorn to bide! -  
       Would God, I in my native land  
           Had with my slaughtered brothers died! [...]

          Thy Kingdom come! Let Light and Grace  
           Throughout all lands in triumph go;  
 75       Till pride and strife to love give place,  
           And blood and tears forget to flow;  
       Till Europe mourn for Afric's woe,  
           And o'er the Deep her arms extend  
       To lift her where she lieth low -  
           And prove indeed her Christian Friend!

Though the captive's plaint is eventually conciliatory, and far from expressive of the naked aggression of 'Makanna's Gathering', we must remember that Pringle limits this poem to the *supposed* sentiments of *some, converted*, Caffers and Ghonaquas [my italics]. In each of Pringle's poems where South Africans speak, Pringle tries to express the sentiments, as far as he is able and from his perspective, of the specific group he has chosen. In this case, though the captive is converted and conciliatory, the captive's narrative contains harsh criticism of the massacres and enslavement to which many peoples were subjected, and, as such, is strong medicine for *Friendship's Offering*.

Pringle included many of his own poems in the 1834 edition, once again, mostly 'Scottish' or romantic,<sup>105</sup> and one, 'The Valley of Vision' (pp. 248-252), which is another attempt by Pringle at a longer, moral poem with philosophical overtones, like the early 'Dream in Fairyland', and the later 'Noon-Day Dream'.<sup>106</sup> Even more

105 The Scottish songs include 'O the Ewe-Bughting's Bonny' (pp. 211-213) and 'Mary of Glen-Fyne' (pp. 286-287). Amongst the romantic poems are 'Oh Maid of the Tweed, An Emigrant's Song' (pp. 94-95), 'A Farewell' (pp. 215-216), and 'Sonnet' (p. 288).

106 In 'The Valley of Vision', the author sees two streams of people enacting the biblical drama of following either the 'straight' or 'Narrow path' (p. 249). The bulk floods into the court of 'Worldly Pleasure' (p. 250). The goddess, an imitation of Circe, then transforms her eager acolytes into wolves and swine (p. 252). Of interest, as an aside, is that the 'Narrow Path' is described as being 'like some fissure cleft / By earthquake or volcanic fires' (p. 249). This resembles the kloof on Pringle's farm,

politically provocative than the 'Captive of Camalú', who is converted to Christianity, is the defiant speaker in 'The Fount of Uhlanga, An African Sketch' (pp. 345-346):<sup>107</sup>

- 10        Standing by the dark blue water,  
           Drest in robe of panther's hide,  
           Who is she? - Old Tshio's daughter,  
           Bold Makanna's widowed bride.  
           Stern she stands, her left hand clasping  
           By the arm her wondering child:  
           He, her shaggy mantle grasping,  
           Gazes up with aspect mild.
- 20        Thrice in the soft fount of nursing  
           With sharp steel she pierced a vein, -  
           Thrice the White Oppressor cursing,  
           While the blood poured down like rain, -  
           Wide upon the dark blue water,  
           Sprinkling thrice the crimson tide, -  
           Spoke Ishusa, Tshio's daughter,  
           Bold Makanna's widowed bride: -
- 30        "Boy! the pale Son of the Stranger  
           Hath thy father foully slain:  
           Swear to be thy sire's avenger -  
           Swear to break thy country's chain!  
           By Uhlanga's Sacred Fountain  
           To that task I pledge thee now;  
           And the Spirits of the Mountain  
           Witness stern the widow's vow!
- 40        "When thy arm grows strong for battle,  
           Thou shalt sound Makanna's cry,  
           Till ten thousand shields shall rattle  
           To war-axe and assegai.  
           Then when, like hail-storm in harvest,  
           On the foe sweeps thy career,  
           Shall UHLANGA, whom thou servest,  
           Make them stubble to thy spear.

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Glen-Lynden, which is described in 'Evening Rambles' as 'Like fissure cleft by earthquake's shock' (line 71). In the *Narrative* (pp. 32-33), Pringle describes his party's arduous five day journey up this kloof when they were on their way to their new settlement. The glen is '[e]mbattled, as it were, with natural ramparts of freestone or trap rock - and seemingly garrisoned with troops of large baboons.' The rocks, he says, 'with a little aid from fancy, one might imagine them the ruins of Hindoo or Egyptian temples, with their half-decayed obelisks, columns and statues of monster deities' (p. 32). After making it through the kloof, the party reach their "'Promised Land'" (p. 34 - Pringle's quotation marks). Pringle, therefore, clearly felt that he had taken the 'narrow path' in his own life.

107 This was published, with several modifications, as 'The Incantation' in *African Sketches*.



Pereira and Chapman state that:

He [Pringle] also initiated a 'tradition' of protest poetry which, in the case of 'Makanna's Gathering', saw him adopting another pseudo-persona in order to advocate retaliation by the Xhosa against the injustices of British colonial incursions. When Makanna's widowed bride in 'The Incantation' urges her child to embrace revolutionary action in the future, we move beyond Roy Campbell's biological/sociological ambiguities in 'The Zulu Girl' to the Soweto poetry of the 1970s, where Mongane Serote also utilizes the figures of mother and child: no longer to warn whites, but to advocate black solidarity and action.<sup>108</sup>

The link drawn between Pringle and Serote above is, I believe, coincidental rather than direct. What is more interesting in this poem is that Pringle is, as before, taking sides in an argument and trying to think his way into the mind of a woman whose father, a chief, was killed by white colonialists. Her action of starting a bloodfeud, though it might be considered unchristian by Pringle's audience, is morally consistent within her own frame of reference, and there is nothing in the poem to suggest that it should be otherwise. Indeed, in a note in *African Sketches*, Pringle suggests that the god Uhlanga might be 'like the Thor and Woden of our own Teutonic ancestors.'<sup>109</sup> But Pringle goes further by suggesting that the child must have the responsibility not only of avenging his father, but also of liberating his people - 'break thy country's chain!' - which will involve killing thousands of the foe. This might well act as a warning to whites (though one can only speculate how quickly this poem would have been banned had the Xhosa population of the Cape been generally literate) but the warning is complicated if one considers that whites are described as being obviously in the wrong. The implication of the poem is that whites either lift the 'chain', or the Xhosa will attempt to break it with moral justification.

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108 Pereira and Chapman, p. xxiv.

109 In Pereira and Chapman, p. 100.

Meiring speculates that 'it must have been a strange and rather unsatisfying experience for a man whose fearless writing had caused his disgrace at the Cape, and whose articles in England on slavery showed no squeamishness, to find himself associated with the insipid 'elegant publications' ('pretty picture books,' he called them).'<sup>110</sup> Pringle's contributions to *Friendship's Offering* became increasingly polemical towards the end of his editorship, but it is evident that he felt constrained by the nature of the annual, which he counteracted by increasing the moral and didactic content of the annual. Pringle's writings against slavery during this period, however, show no evidence of restraint.

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<sup>110</sup> Meiring, p. 143.

## 6: Writings against slavery

From Pringle's appointment in March 1827 as secretary to the Anti-Slavery Society until his death in 1834, he devoted most of his time and energy to the abolitionist cause. This included his secretarial duties, prodigious amounts of correspondence, many articles for the *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, as well as producing almost all the material for the *Anti-Slavery Record*. He poured his efforts chiefly into prose, but also produced several specifically anti-slavery poems. Pringle's sonnet 'Slavery' was published in the *Oriental Herald*, 12 (January-March 1827), p. 472, just before his appointment to the Anti-Slavery Society.<sup>1</sup> It can be compared with a typical anti-slavery sonnet of the period, 'An Island of the West', from *Friendship's Offering*:

### Slavery

Oh Slavery! thou art a bitter draught!  
 And twice accursèd is thy poisoned bowl,  
 Which taints with leprosy the White Man's soul,  
 Not less than his by whom its dregs are quaffed.  
 The Slave sinks down, o'ercome by cruel craft,  
 Like beast of burthen on the earth to roll.  
 The Master, though in luxury's lap he loll,  
 Feels the foul venom, like a rankling shaft,  
 Strike through his reins. As if a demon laughed,  
 10 He, laughing, treads his victim in the dust -  
 The victim of his avarice, rage, or lust.  
 But the poor Captive's moan the whirlwinds waft  
 To Heaven - not unavenged: the Oppressor quakes  
 With secret dread, and shares the hell he makes!

### An Island of the West.

It was a lovely scene: The moonlight lay  
 Restless and flickering on a glassy sea;  
 By fresh and crystal streams, stately and free  
 Grew palms and spicy shrubs; and in the grey  
 And silvery beauty of the night, the play  
 Of the light breeze, cool from the mountain lea,

<sup>1</sup> Pringle, rather implausibly, dates 'Slavery' to 1823 in *African Sketches*.

Came breathing o'er the woodlands fragrantly.  
 And there were flowers that bloomed not in the day,  
 But in the hour of silence and of sleep  
 10   Unclosed their sweetness to the moonlight air. -  
 It seemed an Eden, circled by the deep!  
 - But with the day-break fled that vision fair:  
 For then came darkly forth to toil and weep  
 Sad myriads held in hopeless bondage there!<sup>2</sup>

Instead of describing the plight of slaves and relying on the pathos of the reader, Pringle's sonnet turns the tables by rebuking Europeans in general for the 'curse' of slavery: 'And twice accursèd is thy poisoned bowl, / Which taints with leprosy the White Man's soul, / Not less than his by whom its dregs are quaffed' (lines 2-4). The philosophy of mutual degradation in Pringle's sonnet accurately mirrors his assertions in prose. In Ignatius Sancho's letter to Lawrence Sterne about slavery, Sancho says 'Consider slavery - what it is - how bitter a draught and how many are made to drink it.'<sup>3</sup> Pringle's sonnet distils and concentrates the venom of the 'bitter draught' by stating that slavery debases all who are involved in it, and that Heaven avenges slaves, since slave owners slide naturally into a moral hell of their own making. Pringle uses the strong image of poison, but also includes vice, lust, heaven and hell in his profile of slavery. In other words, Pringle's philosophy sees the poison tainting all who are involved in slavery, and adds an evangelical sting in the tail for the oppressors. In contrast, the second sonnet by 'H' lulls the reader into a false sense of security until the final couplet informs the reader that the island of the West has a dark but hopeless side to it. The second sonnet does not directly attack slave owners, and is sentimental in mood. Pringle certainly recognised the effectiveness of this type of sentimental anti-slavery poetry as emotive propaganda for the abolitionist cause, and often included it

2 By 'H', *Friendship's Offering*, 1830, p. 142.

3 In *Black Writers in Britain 1760-1890*, ed. by Paul Edwards and David Dabydeen (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), p. 27. Sancho's letter was published in a collection of Sterne's letters in 1775.

in *Friendship's Offering* and the *Anti-Slavery Reporter*.<sup>4</sup> In his poem, however, Pringle aims to berate slave owners, the system in general, and the reader, rather than use the gentle persuasion of the second sonnet.<sup>5</sup> Coleridge, in *The Watchman*, had made a distinction between benevolence and sensibility: 'Benevolence impels to action'.<sup>6</sup> For him 'the proper response to slavery is outrage that prompts the agent to act in some way.'<sup>7</sup> Pringle's sonnet follows this prescription, rather than merely attempting to evoke a sense of pity in the reader.

'The Slave Dealer' was written for *The Anti-Slavery Album*, where it appeared in 1828. As with 'Slavery', the poem focuses on the effects of slavery on the oppressor. In this case the man is haunted by the screams of a slave woman whom he had murdered, and knows that he alone is to meet God, though he is afraid to do so: 'And now with God I have to deal, / And dare not meet His eye!' (lines 47-48). Pringle employs the slave-dealer's voice in aid of his cause, but, typically, bases the sentiments expressed on an actual case. He notes in *African Sketches* that a real slave-dealer expressed similar sentiments in 1829, 'long after the sketch was written': 'Now, their screams haunt me, night and day, and I have no peace and expect no mercy!'<sup>8</sup>

A call to action appears in 'The Honey-Bird and the Woodpecker: A Fable for Juvenile Readers'.<sup>9</sup> The poem is explicitly targeted at young readers, an increasingly

4 Choosing *Friendship's Offering* for 1830 at random, I found the following anti-slavery poems: 'A Cry from South Africa' by James Montgomery (pp. 37-39), 'An Island of the West' by 'H' (p. 142), and 'The African', anonymous, (pp. 177-180).

5 Compare Pringle's similar acerbic criticism in the sonnets 'The Hottentot', 'The Caffer', and 'The Bushman' which were used in *Thompson's Travels*.

6 *The Watchman*, ed. by Lewis Patton (1795; Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 40.

7 Laurence Lockridge, *Coleridge the Moralist* (London: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 208.

8 In Pereira and Chapman, p. 110. Compare Southey's 'The Sailor who had Served in the Slave Trade', 1789, which does not have a religious ending.

9 *The Tourist*, 1 (14 January, 1833), pp. 161-162.

valuable market as the explosion of juvenile keepsakes, forget-me-nots and other annuals in the beginning of the 1830's attests.<sup>10</sup> The poem is an elaborate metaphor constructed around the honeyguide (*cuculus indicator*) which had developed a symbiotic relationship with man. The honeyguide, which is incapable of opening a beehive itself, leads human beings and woodpeckers to the hives in order to get a share of the spoils. The bees are likened to the Xhosa, who lived in 'beehive' huts.<sup>11</sup> The final stanza in *The Tourist* appeals to the young reader, the 'little dear',<sup>12</sup> in a fairly sarcastic way, to think about slaves whenever he/she takes sugar.<sup>13</sup> Pringle brings the issue of slavery down to a very simple level, with great effect. In so doing, not only does he advocate a consumer boycott of slave products, but also uses the 'very simple style' of the 'Bechuana Boy', which was designed to influence 'very common readers.'<sup>14</sup> Another poem in a similar vein is 'Rhymes for Youthful Readers: on Colonial Slavery':

We are all of us stained by this national crime,  
( 'Tis a serious thing, though I tell it in rhyme!)  
For the Stealers and Holders and Drivers of Slaves  
Soon would cease from their deeds o'er the Western waves,  
If good people at home, when they sweeten their food,  
Would abstain from the cane-juice that's water'd with blood.  
'Tis not quite enough to look sorry and sigh,  
While the Colonists flog, and the Negroes die;  
Or to calculate, hesitate, prate, and pause,  
10     And higgie about the Why and Because,  
While the innocent blood, that cries to Heaven,  
Flows on, unstaunched and unforgiven,

10 See Renier, pp. 17-19.

11 See Pringle's notes in 'The African Honeybird,' *New Years Gift & Juvenile Souvenir*, ed. by A. A. Watts (London: Longman, Orme, Brown & Green, 1833), 100-107.

12 This stanza is not 'clearly aimed at the employers of slave labour in Jamaican sugar plantations', as Pereira and Chapman suggest, p. 88. *The Tourist* was hardly read by pro-slavery groups, except to vilify it, and the entire poem is clearly aimed at telling young readers about the hypocrisy and economics of slavery.

13 The final stanza in *African Sketches* makes a direct link between the commando system at the Cape and the destruction and murder of the Xhosa.

14 Pringle included it in a note to *African Sketches*, but he changed the final stanza to make the tone more mature, and more suited to the African context of the book.



A Gulf of terror, deep and broad,  
 'Twixt England and an angry God!  
 Till the arm of Vengeance awake in its strength,  
 To strike off the Bondman's fetters at length -  
 To dash the Oppressor down to the dust,  
 And bid proud Man to his Brother be just!  
 Such judgements may be look'd for ere long,  
 20 Unless we redress the African's wrong.  
 'But what can we do?' say my Readers dear:  
 Let us try to keep each his conscience clear,  
 As far as we may, of this fearful crime,  
 By *doing our duty* while yet there's time.  
 The youngest and poorest may give their mite,  
 To rouse up our Nation to act aright,  
 And to act with speed - ere matters are worse -  
 To wash their hands from this heavy curse. -  
 And I think I see them arising now,  
 30 Like their British sires, with resolute brow,  
 By the mountain stern and the surf-beat strand,  
 From the forge, the loom, and the furrow's land,  
 From the lofty hall and the lowly hearth, -  
 To launch their united MANDATE forth,  
 By decree of our King and Parliament,  
 To the earth's remotest regions sent;  
 While nations, shouting from shore to shore,  
 Sing 'JUBILEE! SLAVERY IS NO MORE!' <sup>15</sup>

This poem contains a direct and detailed call to action. The sentimental reader, who in Coleridge's *Watchman* 'sips a beverage sweetened with human blood, even while she is weeping over the refined sorrows of Werter<sup>(sic)</sup> or of Clementina' is told that 'tis not quite enough to look sorry and sigh' (line 7).<sup>16</sup> Pringle's reader, however, is no longer only a woman. His poem implicates the whole nation in the crime of slavery (lines 1-2), actually calls for a consumer boycott of sugar (lines 3-6), and calls for immediate, not delayed, action to be taken about slavery.<sup>17</sup> This involves donating money to the cause (lines 25-26), and actively pressing the King and Parliament for change. Furthermore, it aims to rouse young and old, middle, upper and working

15 *The Tourist*, 1 (December 1832), p. 151.

16 *The Watchman*, p. 139.

17 Pringle, as a member of the Anti-Slavery Society's Agency Committee, advocated the immediate, rather than phased, abolition of slavery. See Morris (1982), p. 380.

classes. This neatly encapsulates Pringle's pragmatic approach to the anti-slavery campaign. In addition, Pringle appeals seriously and directly to the constituency he tried to educate, satirically, in 'The Institute', that is, women, 'Drapers, Grocers' and so on.<sup>18</sup>

Pringle's anti-slavery poetry is characterised by an attempt to induce an active response in the reader, rather than mere pathos. It is an integral part, therefore, of his political project. Apart from this, Pringle's central argument is that slavery brutalises both master and slave. This argument is present in almost all of Pringle's articles and poems, but he deals with the issue at length in 'On the Demoralizing Influence of Slavery.'<sup>19</sup> Here, he reveals that his attitudes are based on a Hobbesian view of human nature: 'In short, cruelty is, generally speaking, natural to the heart of man' (p. 163).<sup>20</sup> If that is the case, then it follows that humans need the guidance of a moral law and society to elevate them from a state of nature: 'Man is a tyrant, it is true, to the inferior animals; but, unrestrained by law, he becomes a wolf to man' (p. 163). When the law sanctions an activity which is based on cruelty, the implication is that all involved will be brutalised and sink to a lower level of civilisation. This way of thinking implies that all humans are equal and fashioned by their environment, and that societies will develop in the same way, given the same circumstances. This is another central tenet of the Scottish school.<sup>21</sup> Coupled to the philosophical argument is the religious one that the oppressor loses his/her rights to humanity in both the eyes of

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18 *The Institute*, p. 52.

19 *Anti-Slavery Monthly Reporter*, 3 (January 1828), 161-174.

20 Pringle, like the rest of the Scottish school of philosophers, was deeply sceptical of the idea of the noble savage. See Graham McMaster, *Scott and Society* (Cambridge: CUP, 1981), p. 72.

21 See McMaster, p. 53. Pringle earned himself many enemies at the Cape for opposing self-government for the same reasons. For example, in the *Narrative*, he says that not even British colonists should be the 'judges or avengers of their own wrongs.' 'Without strong *legal restraints*, such, alas! is human nature on the large scale, that mere humanity will always be too feeble for passion and selfishness' (p. 229).

God, as well as of society, because he/she denies those rights to slaves. One of the many instances of this idea appears in an article 'On the Mitigation of Negro Slavery' in <sup>the</sup> West Indies, a piece which argues for the immediate abolition, not mitigation, of slavery.<sup>22</sup> In this instance, Pringle argues that the owner has lost his/her right to humanity by choice, because he/she tries to inflict the same on powerless slaves to keep them in check: '[The slave] is systematically brutalized, and the image of his Maker is as far as possible effaced in him, lest he should feel and claim his rights as a human being' (p. 250).

Ancillary to his central arguments, it is noticeable that Pringle's anti-slavery articles from 1826 onwards become increasingly outspoken in their condemnatory rhetoric, until, by 1829, rhetorical flourishes such as the following are not uncommon: Mauritius, a 'human slaughter-house' (p. 480), once a paradise, is now 'destined to be in future chiefly remembered from its having been the foul and abhorred scene of a long series of almost incredible cruelties, and of cold-blooded, grinding oppressions, inflicted by the white inhabitants upon multitudes of innocent Africans, torn from their native country by every mode of treachery and violence, and literally *worked to death* under the lash, to glut the sordid avarice of their inhuman taskmasters.'<sup>23</sup>

Pringle's philosophical arguments and impassioned rhetoric are evident in *The History of Mary Prince*, a publication which provides the most comprehensive account we have of Pringle's attitudes towards slavery.

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<sup>22</sup> *Oriental Herald* (February 1829), 250-255.

<sup>23</sup> From 'State of Slavery in the Mauritius', *Oriental Herald* (March 1829), 475-500 (p. 475).

### 6.1: *The History of Mary Prince*

*The History of Mary Prince* (1831) is, as far as we know, the first and only account by a slave woman of her experiences to be published in Britain.<sup>24</sup> Its publication caused an immediate uproar which provoked three further editions within a year,<sup>25</sup> a petition on her behalf to the British Parliament, two vicious attacks against it in contemporary journals,<sup>26</sup> and two court cases for libel. At Prince's request, the biography was dictated for publication to her friend, the poet Susanna Strickland, in the Pringle's drawing room in London.<sup>27</sup> The account was then edited by Thomas Pringle after examining Mary as to its veracity.<sup>28</sup> Pringle stated that: 'The narrative was taken down from Mary's own lips by a lady who happened to be at the time residing in my family as a visitor. It was written out fully, with all the narrator's repetitions and prolixities, and afterwards pruned into its present shape; retaining, as far as was practicable, Mary's exact expressions and peculiar phraseology. No fact of importance has been omitted, and not a single circumstance or sentiment has been added. It is essentially her own, without any material alteration farther than was

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24 'Mary Prince [was] the only ex-slave woman presently known to have written in Britain against slavery.' Moira Ferguson, *Subject to Others, British Women Writers and Colonial Slavery, 1670-1834* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 5. Mary Prince was still, technically, a slave in Antigua when her story was recorded. Ferguson's 'written' should be interpreted broadly, for though Prince claimed a modicum of literacy, she dictated her story for publication.

25 No copies of the 2nd and 4th editions have been found thus far. All references in this paper will be to *The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave, related by Herself, with a supplement by the Editor*, ed. by Thomas Pringle, 3rd edn (London: Westley and Davis; Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, 1831). Reprints of *Mary Prince* are to be found in *The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave, Related by Herself*, ed. by Moira Ferguson (London and New York: Pandora, 1987), and in *The Classic Slave Narratives*, ed. by H. L. Gates Jr (New York: New American Library, 1987).

26 James Macqueen, 'The Colonial Empire of Great Britain, Letter to Earl Grey, First Lord of the Treasury, &c. &c., From James Macqueen, Esq.,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (November 1831), pp. 744-764, and 'The Anti-Slavery Society, and the West Indian Colonists,' *Bermuda Royal Gazette* (22 November 1831).

27 'The idea of writing Mary Prince's history was first suggested by herself. She wished it to be done, she said, that the good people in England might hear from a slave what a slave had felt and suffered,' Pringle, preface to *Mary Prince*.

28 Pringle cross-examined Prince with the help of the anti-slavery activist, Joseph Phillips, who had known her in Antigua.

requisite to exclude redundancies and gross grammatical errors, so as to render it clearly intelligible.'<sup>29</sup> Paul Edwards and David Dabydeen say, correctly, that 'the truth of Pringle's editorial comment is borne out by the language of the narrative.' They support their argument with several examples drawn from the narrative, including, as they say, Prince's 'down-to-earth' expression, use of creolized English, 'live' situation reportage and 'admissions of the difficulty of expressing herself.'<sup>30</sup> This narrative, then, stands in stark contrast to most edited slave narratives of the period where 'all Africanisms, all the special images and metaphors from the vernacular, were suppressed.'<sup>31</sup> Proceeds of the publication were given to a fund for Mary's future benefit.<sup>32</sup>

The text itself consists of a preface, Prince's narrative, an appendix and a sixteen page editorial supplement detailing the furore provoked by its original publication. As such, *Mary Prince* is indeed a 'multitiered narrative'<sup>33</sup> which gives insight not only into the life experience of a slave woman both in the West Indies and in England, but also into the ideas of a range of people on either side of the slavery debate. The 'voices' in this history range from anti-slavery activists and washerwomen in England to slaves, planters, magistrates, priests and ship captains in the West Indies. *Mary Prince* is a social history in itself. A synopsis of her life will provide a preliminary context and structure for a discussion of Pringle's response to the two most contested issues in the narrative, ill-treatment and virtue.

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29 Pringle, Preface to *Mary Prince*.

30 Edwards and Dabydeen, p. 157.

31 For further commentary on standard editorial practices of the time see Janheinz Jahn, *A History of Neo-African Literature / Writing in Two Continents*, tr. O. Coburn and U. Lehrburgen (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), pp. 126-127.

32 See the postscript to the second edition, reprinted at the end of the preface of the third edition.

33 Ferguson, *Subject to Others*, p. 282.

Prince was born in Bermuda in about 1788. 'As an infant,' she says, '[...] I was bought along with my mother by old Captain Darrel, and given to his grandchild, little Miss Betsey Williams' (p. 1). Betsey's mother, Mrs. Williams was 'kind-hearted' but ill-treated by her husband. 'My poor mistress bore his ill-treatment with great patience, and all her slaves loved and pitied her' (p. 1). Mary recalls the first twelve years of her life with qualified fondness: 'I was made quite a pet of by Miss Betsey, and loved her very much. She used to lead me about by the hand, and call me her little nigger. This was the happiest period of my life; for I was too young to understand rightly my condition as a slave' (p. 1). At the age of twelve she was sent to nurse the son of a Mrs Pruden, who did 'not treat [her] very unkindly' though she struck Mary once (p. 2). Then Mrs. Williams died, and Mr. Williams sold her and other household slaves, in the presence of her mother, to a Captain I. for £57. Mary feared that she would never see her family again. The slaves of the new household were persistently tortured and flogged by Captain and Mrs. I.: 'My mistress often robbed me too of the hours that belong to sleep. She used to sit up very late, frequently even until morning; and then I had to stand at a bench and wash during the greater part of the night, or pick wool and cotton; and often I have dropped down overcome by sleep and fatigue, till roused from my state of stupor by the whip, and forced to start up to my tasks' (p. 7). Mary's 'aunt' and protectress in the household, a slave called Hetty, was beaten mercilessly after a cow she had fastened got loose. She miscarried and died shortly afterwards as a result. 'All the slaves said that death was a good thing for poor Hetty; but I cried very much for her death' (p. 7). Mary then had to assume all of Hetty's chores. Once, a jar with 'an old deep crack' in it broke and she was given a hundred lashes the following day:



Oh sad for me! I cannot easily forget it. He tied me upon a ladder, and gave me a hundred lashes with his own hand, and master Benjy stood by to count them for him. When he had licked me for some time he sat down to take breath; then after resting, he beat me again and again, until he was quite wearied, and so hot (for the weather was very sultry), that he sank back in his chair, almost like to faint. While my mistress went to bring him a drink, there was a dreadful earthquake. Part of the roof fell down, and every thing in the house went - clatter, clatter, clatter. Oh I thought the end of all things near at hand; and I was so sore with the flogging, that I scarcely cared whether I lived or died. [...] It was an awful day for us all (p. 8).

On the next occasion when she was beaten and kicked by Captain I., she ran away, back to her mother, but her father returned her. She nevertheless stood up to Captain I. verbally in the presence of her father. '[Captain I.] told me to hold my tongue and go about my work, or he would find a way to settle me. He did not, however, flog me that day' (p. 9).

After five years of harsh treatment at the hands of the I.'s, she was sent to Turk's Island where she was sold to a Mr. D and sent to labour in the salt works. Apart from the illnesses and boils caused by the work, she was continually ill-treated:

Though we worked from morning till night, there was no satisfying Mr. D--. I hoped, when I left Capt. I--, that I should have been better off, but I found it was going from one butcher to another. There was this difference between them: my former master used to beat me while raging and foaming with passion; Mr. D-- was usually quite calm. He would stand by and give orders for a slave to be cruelly whipped, and assist in the punishment, without moving a muscle of his face; walking about and taking snuff with the greatest composure. Nothing could touch his hard heart - neither sighs, nor tears, nor prayers, nor streaming blood; he was deaf to our cries, and careless of our sufferings. - Mr. D-- has often stripped me naked, hung me up by the wrists, and beat me with the cow-skin, with his own hand, till my body was raw with gashes. Yet there was nothing very remarkable in this; for it might serve as a sample of the common usage of the slaves on that horrible island (p. 10).

On Turk's Island Prince also witnessed the murder of other slaves. After ten years she left it, still as a slave of Mr. D. Conditions for her in Bermuda were slightly better,

but still oppressive. She rescued Miss D. one day from being cruelly beaten by her drunken father. She was probably being sexually abused by Mr. D. at the same time, but she alludes to this indirectly only:

He had an ugly fashion of stripping himself quite naked, and ordering me then to wash him in a tub of water. This was worse to me than all the licks. Sometimes when he called me to wash him I would not come, my eyes were so full of shame. He would then come to beat me. [...] I then told him I would not live longer with him, for he was a very indecent man - very spiteful, and too indecent; with no shame for his servants, no shame for his own flesh (p. 13).

In Bermuda, Prince attempted to start to make some money of her own (in order to buy her freedom), seeing that there was more opportunity of doing so than on Turk's Island. 'By about 1814 she inveigle[d] being sold to Mr & Mrs John Wood because they live[d] in Antigua where manumission [was] less difficult to obtain,'<sup>34</sup> but the Woods persistently refused to sell Prince her freedom even though they manumitted five other slaves during her time with them. Mr. and Mrs. Wood, as well as a free mulatto woman, Martha Wilcox (who 'was a saucy woman, very saucy' (p. 14)), continued to make Prince's life a misery. There is a suggestion that Mrs. Wood's ill-treatment of Mary was the result of sexual jealousy.

On one occasion, Mary appeared before a magistrate: 'I was also sent by Mrs. Wood to be put in the Cage one night, and was next morning flogged, by the magistrate's order, at her desire; and this all for a quarrel I had about a pig with another slave woman. I was flogged on my naked back on this occasion: although I was in no fault after all; for old Justice Dyett, when we came before him, said that I was in the right, and ordered the pig to be given to me' (p. 15). She also set about in earnest to earn her freedom, which she was able to do as she had more free time: 'I

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34 Ferguson, *Subject to Others*, p. 285.

took in washing, and sold coffee and yams and other provisions to the captains of ships. I did not sit idling during the absence of my owners; for I wanted, by all honest means, to earn money to buy my freedom.<sup>35</sup> Sometimes I bought a hog cheap on board ship, and sold it for double the money on shore; and I also earned a good deal by selling coffee. By this means I by degrees acquired a little cash. A gentleman also lent me some to help to buy my freedom - but when I could not get free he got it back again. His name was Captain Abbot' (p. 16).

She attended a Methodist prayer meeting, which impressed her and 'led [her] spirit to the Moravian church' (p. 17). There, she met and married a man called Daniel James who had bought his freedom. The Woods were extremely angry because she had not asked their permission and flogged her. 'However,' says Mary, 'Mr. Wood afterwards allowed Daniel to have a place to live in our yard, which we were very thankful for' (p. 18). Later, she persuaded the Woods to let her accompany them to England. When she arrived in London she had severe rheumatism and St. Anthony's fire,<sup>36</sup> but was still made to do washing; 'but the English washerwomen who were at work there, when they saw that I was so ill, had pity upon me and washed them for me' (p. 19). After two or three months, and several arguments with the Woods, she eventually walked out on them, believing herself to be free in England. She contacted the Moravians in Hatton Garden. A poor shoe black (Mash) and his wife took her in and treated her illness as best as they could. A Mrs. Hill told her about the Anti-Slavery Society. She went to them and they gave her 'a little money from time to time' (p. 20). They attempted to purchase her freedom in Antigua (w<sup>h</sup>ither she wished to return) from Mr. Wood, but he refused obstinately. She was forced to make her living

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35 The innuendo here is that she was not doing so by 'dishonest' means, such as prostitution.

36 Erysipelas, a painful inflammation and sub-cutaneous swelling of the skin.

as best she could, mostly as a charwoman.<sup>37</sup> Finally, she was employed by the Pringles as a charwoman and her history was written down by '[her] good friend, Miss S--' (p. 23). She ends her narrative, which Pringle says is given 'as nearly as was possible in Mary's precise words', with the following impassioned plea:

I have been a slave myself - I know what slaves feel - I can tell by myself what other slaves feel, and by what they have told me. The man that says slaves be quite happy in slavery - that they don't want to be free - that man is either ignorant or a lying person. I never heard a slave say so. I never heard a Buckra<sup>38</sup> man say so, till I heard tell of it in England. Such people ought to be ashamed of themselves. They can't do without slaves, they say. What's the reason they can't do without slaves as well as in England? No slaves here - no whips - no stocks - no punishment, except for wicked people. They hire servants in England; and if they don't like them, they send them away: they can't lick them. Let them work ever so hard in England, they are far better off than slaves. If they get a bad master, they give warning and go hire to another. They have their liberty. That's just what *we* want. We don't mind hard work, if we had proper treatment, and proper wages like English servants, and proper time given in the week to keep us from breaking the Sabbath. But they won't give it: they will have work - work - work, night and day, sick or well, till we are quite done up; and we must not speak up nor look amiss, however much we be abused. And then when we are quite done up, who cares for us, more than for a lame horse? This is slavery. I tell it, to let English people know the truth; and I hope they will never leave off to pray God, and call loud to the great King of England, till all the poor blacks be given free, and slavery done up for evermore (p. 23).

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37 For instance, a Mrs. Forsyth: 'In the spring I got into service with a lady, who saw me at the house where I sometimes worked as a charwoman. This lady's name was Mrs. Forsyth. She had been in the West Indies, and was accustomed to Blacks, and liked them. I was with her six months, and went with her to Margate. She treated me well, and gave me a good character when she left London' (p. 22).

38 'A West Indian white.'

### 6.1.1: Care and Abuse: The Clemency of the Horsewhip

Prince's stated desire is to let the 'truth' of slavery be known - of which a large part is the ill-treatment slaves suffer. Prince's story is in part a chronicle of the physical and mental abuse that she suffered (the sexual abuse is also hinted at.)<sup>39</sup> What is remarkable, however, given that this opportunity to speak her mind in printed form might easily have resulted in a litany of specific allegations against various people and nothing more, is that Prince's story is a full life history. She tells not only of her own sufferings (and that of her family and other slaves), but also details the noteworthy acts of kindness, friendships, partnerships and alliances in her life, which are cross-racial, cross-class and cross-cultural.<sup>40</sup> As such, it becomes difficult to accuse her of dictating, or Pringle of writing a rhetorical anti-slavery tract, which could then be discounted by the pro-slavery lobby on the grounds that it was *merely* rhetorical.<sup>41</sup> Being rhetorical is exactly what James Macqueen, the editor of the *Glasgow Herald*, accuses Pringle of, rather than Mary Prince: 'but if I can extract, as I trust by the aid and strength of truth to be able to do, Pringle's sting, and Pringle's venom, out of Mary's tale, all her other accusations must of necessity drop off harmless and despicable.'<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, Macqueen does his best to discredit Prince's accusations

39 Ferguson shows how Mary Prince 'sparingly but strikingly alludes to that concealed area of her life taken up with sexual abuse and harassment,' *Subject to Others*, p. 285.

40 This calls into question Macqueen's assertion that Mary had reputedly told another Antigonian that 'those who questioned her desired her to state only that which was bad concerning her master and mistress!' Macqueen, p. 748.

41 'The pro-slavery advocates (one of whom baptized her) query only the intensity of the cruelty she alleges, and not the account itself,' Ferguson, introduction to *Mary Prince*, p. 25.

42 Macqueen, p. 744. Macqueen can hardly suppress his own racist venom and violence, though. He speaks of 'black filth' (p. 751), and says that not even the power of the British government 'can alter human nature, nor make the lowest description of African savages, or the childrens' children of these savages, industrious, intelligent, and civilized, in a year, or in an age.' (p. 753). He also recommends that someone should 'take Pringle by the neck, and with a good rattan or Mauritius ox whip, lash him through London,' (p. 752) Concerning 'sting' and 'venom', Macqueen was probably not aware of the final couplet of Pringle's 'Bushman Song' (1825): 'And none who there his sting provokes, / Shall find its poison vain'.

of ill-treatment, at least against the Woods, by attempting to prove that she was well-treated by them. He attempts to do so by adducing the testimony of several people who knew her at the time: amongst others, two pastors, three doctors, several people in the Wood's employ, the free 'woman of colour'<sup>43</sup> Martha Wilcox, and her own husband, Daniel James. Most of these claim that Mary was never beaten, except for Ann Todd, 'another respectable female of colour,'<sup>44</sup> who claims that she was 'punished but once by Mr. Wood, and that was with a horsewhip.'<sup>45</sup> Daniel James, in a letter to Mr. Wood, claims that Mary had never been punished by him 'to his knowledge', but, considering that Mr. Wood had ordered him to be turned off his property when she left them in London, it would be unlikely that he would be too outspoken against him if he wanted to stand any chance of getting his lodgings back.<sup>46</sup> Another witness produced by Macqueen against Prince is Martha Wilcox, whom Mary mentions, and who seems to have borne her a long-standing grudge:

Molly<sup>47</sup> had the very same food that her master and mistress had. Mrs Wood, herself, gave her her food; and when Mrs Wood was sick, I gave it to her. Mrs Wood gave her, the last year I was in the family, three suits of clothes at Christmas; and Mr Wood gave her 8lbs. of flour, 8lbs. of pork, 4 dollars, and a bottle of rum. She got four or five suits during each year, independent of Christmas clothing; very good Irish linen, muslin to make gowns with, shoes for constant wear, and stockings. She was treated so well, not like a servant, that she had a regular breakfast and dinner out of the house, independent of her allowance of 9 bits, 6s. 9d. per week. [...] I never remember Molly being punished at all. She never was at peace with any servant that ever lived in the house. The principal cause of her ill temper was because she was not allowed to go out after bedtime.<sup>48</sup>

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43 Macqueen, p. 748.

44 Macqueen, p. 749.

45 Apparently, this was considered to be a 'light' form of punishment.

46 Pringle doubts the accuracy of James's alleged testimony on the grounds that he had a letter in his possession from James to Mary, dated April 1830, 'couched in strong terms of conjugal affection; expressing his anxiety for her speedy return,' Pringle, *Mary Prince*, p. 30.

47 Mary Prince was alternatively known as Mary Princess of Wales, Molly Prince, Molly Wood and Mary Wood. Presumably, she was given different names by other owners as well.

48 In Macqueen, p. 748. Mary's favoured status with the Woods seems to have roused the jealousy of many other servants and slaves.



Wilcox's statement that Mary was treated 'so well, not like a servant' is telling in Macqueen's case. He, like many slave owners, was attempting to prove on the one hand that their own slaves were well treated (though this implies that most other slaves were less well-treated), but on the other hand that the 'colonial character in general'<sup>49</sup> was so benevolent as to make the ill-treatment of slaves both unlikely and rare. The contradiction between the assertion of slave-owning benevolence and the tacit acknowledgement that some slaves were mistreated causes two major displacements in his argument. The first is that the issue of who exactly maltreated whom is always deferred, the blame laid in another quarter. For instance, the Rev. Mr. Curtin says: 'Mr and Mrs Wood were both, I believe, from Bermuda, where the owners of slaves are remarkable for their humanity and attention to their domestics.'<sup>50</sup> The suppressed claim that slaves were less remarkably treated elsewhere results in a inter-colony rivalry in the race for respectability in the eyes of the world.<sup>51</sup> Pringle is quick to point out the link between these two illogicalities. If Mr. Wood *were* proved to be the 'very *best and mildest*' of slave-owners, then 'what is to be expected of persons whose mildness, or equity, or common humanity no one will dare vouch for? If such things are done in the green tree, what will be done in the dry? - And what else then can Colonial Slavery possibly be, even in its best estate, but a system incurably evil and iniquitous? - I require no other data - I need add no further comment.'<sup>52</sup>

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49 Macqueen, p. 750.

50 In Macqueen, p. 748.

51 A strategy which ultimately did not work in the metropolis. As C. Duncan Rice notes, the designation 'West Indian' in English literature was already 'a useful shorthand for depravity' by 1818. C. Duncan Rice, 'Literary Sources and British Attitudes to Slavery', in *Anti-Slavery, Religion and Reform*, ed. by Christine Bolt and Seymour Drescher (Folkestone: Dawson & Sons, 1980), 319-334 (p. 328).

52 Pringle, supplement to *Mary Prince*, p. 36n.

The second major displacement, caused by the first, is that discussion of relative ill-treatment elides the issue of slavery itself. The possible rights of slaves as human beings are simply not imagined. This is where Pringle's theory that slavery debases both master and servant has its place. Slavery, by its very nature, he argues, results in ill-treatment as people have a natural tendency to be brutish when no restraint is placed on them. Furthermore, slavery itself is ill-treatment. James Macqueen and the Woods fail, or are unable, to recognise that a large part of Mary's ill-treatment consists not only of her 'condition as a slave' (which merely includes forced labour), but also her recognition of that condition, a point which both Prince and Pringle stress throughout.<sup>53</sup>

As the Woods's legal ownership of Mary represents the only power they have over her, they are loathe to part with it, as appears in this scene when Mary Prince once again asks to buy her freedom: 'Mrs. Wood was very angry - she grew quite outrageous - she called me a black devil, and asked me who had put freedom into my head. "To be free is very sweet," I said: but she took good care to keep me a slave. I saw her change colour, and I left the room.'<sup>54</sup>

Whereas the West Indians and their supporters attempted to dilute Prince's accusations of ill-treatment by trying to prove that she was treated 'well', Pringle accepts her accounts of ill-treatment in general. His witnessing of the slave system over the six years of his residence in South Africa gives him the colonial experience to say that 'the facts' of Mary's story are 'indeed shocking, but unhappily not the less credible on that account.'<sup>55</sup> His underlying philosophy, which came to be widely

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<sup>53</sup> See *Mary Prince*, p. 1.

<sup>54</sup> Ferguson discusses the psychology of this situation in her introduction to *Mary Prince*, pp. 16-18.

<sup>55</sup> Pringle, *Mary Prince*, p. 37.

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<sup>54</sup> Ferguson discusses the psychology of this situation in her introduction to *Mary Prince*, pp. 16-18.

<sup>55</sup> Pringle, *Mary Prince*, p. 37.

accepted in anti-slavery circles, is that 'Slavery is a curse to the oppressor scarcely less than to the oppressed: its natural tendency is to brutalize both.'<sup>56</sup> It is unlikely that Mary would have espoused this philosophy, but its effect for Pringle is to focus all attention on slavery itself as an inherently brutalising and violent system. The day to day details of that system (which constitute most of Mary's history) are treated by Pringle as symptomatic of a general disease. Assertions of 'mildness' and humane treatment by pro-slavery advocates become irrelevant, therefore, to the major issue in Pringle's view. For him, Mary's history serves as an illustration: 'The case affords a most instructive illustration of the true spirit of the slave system, and of the pretensions of the slaveholders to assert, not merely their claims to a "vested right" in the *labour* of their bondmen, but to an indefeasible property in them as their "absolute chattels".'<sup>57</sup> His major attack on Mr. Wood is not primarily concerned with the details of his treatment of Mary, but with the fact that he refuses to free her in order to 'punish' her.<sup>58</sup> Pringle treats Mary's story largely as a representative case history, and says that her case 'is by no means a singular one.'<sup>59</sup>

In general, the pro-slavery advocates in this case use the argument of 'good treatment' to enhance their own respectability, to make Mary Prince seem ungrateful, and to avoid raising the issue of slavery itself. Pringle claims that ill-treatment is an inevitable consequence of slavery, and, therefore, that slavery is the real evil to be tackled. Prince would still have the same grounds for complaint, even if she had never been ill-treated.<sup>60</sup>

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56 Pringle, *Mary Prince*, p. 37.

57 Pringle, *Mary Prince*, p. 37.

58 Pringle, *Mary Prince*, p. 36.

59 Pringle, *Mary Prince*, p. 40.

60 Neither Pringle nor Prince seem to be aware of the possible abuses inherent in systems of waged labour. For both, Mary's passage from slave to hired servant represents her 'freedom'.

### 6.1.2: Virtue or Immorality: 'A Tissue of Hypocrisy'

Another powerful tactic of the pro-slavery lobby was to stress the supposed immorality and/or dubious Christianity of slaves in order to discredit them. This was a thorny problem for the Anti-Slavery movement, given the nearly indissoluble links between itself and the Christian mission. It is not surprising that the movement usually attempted to portray slaves (at times dishonestly) both as being 'virtuous' and as being converted, or potential converts to Christianity. Mary Prince must have been aware of her need to appear both virtuous and Christian, having had extensive contact with the Anti-Slavery society both independently and through the Pringles, as well as with Quaker ladies, Moravians and several pastors in England and the West Indies. Her awareness of the uneasiness felt with regard to sex, even sexual abuse, may explain why she merely alludes to the sexual abuse she suffered in the West Indies. Instead, she emphasises her marriage with Daniel James. She also stresses her religious history, especially her first contact with the Moravians in Antigua: 'I never knew rightly that I had much sin till I went there. When I found out that I was a great sinner, I was very sorely grieved, and very much frightened' (p. 17).<sup>61</sup> She also tells of her Christian education in England:

My dear mistress [Mrs. Pringle] teaches me daily to read the word of God, and takes great pains to make me understand it. I enjoy the great privilege of being enabled to attend church three times on the Sunday; and I have met with many friends since I have been here, both clergymen and others. [...] Nor must I forget, among my friends, the Rev. Mr. Mortimer. [...] I trust in God I have profited by what I have heard from him. He never keeps back the truth, and I think he has been the means of opening my eyes and ears much better to understand the word of God. Mr. Mortimer tells me that he cannot open the eyes of my heart, but that I must pray to God to change my heart, and make me know the truth, and the truth will make me free.  
I still live in hope that God will find a way to give me my liberty, and give me back to my husband (p. 22).

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61 This may be an allusion to her sexual 'misconduct' in the eyes of the church.

Prince admits that the 'eyes of her heart' are not yet fully open. She also links spiritual freedom, in the final two sentences above, with physical liberty and the return to her husband. It seems most likely that her attitude towards the church was equivocal. On the one hand, she has enough belief in Christianity to be 'very much frightened' at its threats of punishment. On the other, she uses the church as a space in which to escape from the drudgery of slavery and work (especially in the West Indies), but more importantly, as a space in which to develop social networks which will be of benefit to her in her quest for freedom. In other words, she 'uses' the church for her own purposes. This 'insincerity'<sup>62</sup> of religious belief in slaves, because they were using the church to become free, avoid work, etc., is the point pro-slavery advocates most often attacked, masking their real fear that certain church groups would 'put freedom into [their] heads', which Mrs Wood is quoted as saying.<sup>63</sup> As the *Bermuda Royal Gazette* maintains, Pringle 'sees nothing but purity in a prostitute because she knew when to utter the name of the Deity, to turn up the whites of her eyes, and make a perfect mockery of religion.'<sup>64</sup> Pringle freely admits that Mary's religious education was 'still but very limited, and her views of Christianity indistinct,' but states that her belief 'has nothing of insincerity' in it.<sup>65</sup> Pringle does not attempt to lie about Mary's religious attitudes, content that she is on the road to conversion. For him, her virtue in religious terms rests in this; for her opponents, her religious virtue is a utilitarian sham.

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62 Compare Macqueen's assertion that 'savages' could never be 'civilized', i.e., Christianised amongst other things. Macqueen, p. 753.

63 *Mary Prince*, p. 18.

64 'The Anti-Slavery Society, and the West Indian Colonists', *Bermuda Royal Gazette* (22 November 1831), p. 144.

65 Pringle, *Mary Prince*, p. 35.



A potentially far more damaging charge against Mary, levelled by her pro-slavery antagonists, was that of her sexual 'misconduct'. Such an accusation might have the effect of a) discrediting her virtue in the eyes of the religiously motivated anti-slavery movement, and b) confirming the widespread prejudice that black (slave-) women were all immoral and, therefore, to be treated with contempt. As noted above, Prince says very little about her sexual liaisons in her history. She does, however, mention a certain incident involving a court case and a 'pig', which 'old Justice Dyett' had tried, and 'ordered the pig to be given to [her]' (p. 15). Martha Wilcox, Mary's one-time rival in the Wood household, interprets this incident in a different manner:

A woman, named *Phibba*, came to lodge a complaint to Mrs Wood, that Molly had taken away, not her 'pig,' but '*her husband*,' and she, Molly, in the presence of Mrs Wood, and myself, fought the woman until she tore her down on the steps. The woman then took Molly before a magistrate, (*Mr Dyett*,) where she was punished. She was turned out of the Moravian chapel, and afterwards went and abused the Moravian parson for it. She took in washing, and made money by it. She also made money many, many other ways by her badness; I mean, by allowing men to visit her, and by selling \* \* \* \* \* to worthless men.<sup>66</sup>

Macqueen *et al* eventually proved their point about Prince's sexual activities (though, predictably, the sexual abuse she suffered is never mentioned). As Joan Grant puts it: 'In the course of the two court cases all the allegations about her alleged immorality came out. Quite simply she had lived with a white captain (Abbot) for seven years. [...] Also, she had found another woman in bed with the said captain and had assaulted her. The woman had taken Mary Prince before the Magistrates where the case was thrown out. She had lived with another man who had promised to free her and had left him when he had failed to keep his word. She left Captain Abbot after he

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<sup>66</sup> In Macqueen, p. 748. One wonders at Mary's possible wry amusement when she related the 'pig' incident to the straight laced Miss Strickland (afterwards Mrs Moodie).

had killed a man on Mr. Wood's ship.'<sup>67</sup> Macqueen also uses these allegations against Mary to make insinuations about Pringle's character. For instance, he says that 'after secret closetings and labours with Mary, (in London maid-servants are not removed from the washing-tub to the parlour without an object,) he stood forward publicly as her knight-errant.'<sup>68</sup> Pringle ignores this rhetorical innuendo. His defence of Mary's conduct operates on several levels. Firstly, he quotes a letter from Mr. Wood to Sir Patrick Ross's secretary, in order to attack it, but conspicuously omits the section concerning the 'pig' incident. His footnoted explanation for the omission reads as follows:

I omit the circumstance here mentioned, because it is too indecent to appear in a publication likely to be perused by females. It is, in all probability, a vile calumny; but even if it were perfectly true, it would not serve Mr. Wood's case one straw. - Any reader who wishes it, may see the passage referred to, in the autograph letter in my possession.<sup>69</sup>

The effects of this are to suggest that John Wood himself is not decent to have written such things (even if true), that it is more or less indecent to be interested in such personal details anyway, but that Pringle himself is not trying to hide anything. Indeed, Pringle quotes at length, in the booklet, from a letter by the anti-slavery campaigner Joseph Phillips (who knew both the Woods and Prince in Antigua), where her relationship with Captain Abbot is acknowledged:

Of the immoral conduct ascribed to Molly by Mr. Wood, I can say nothing further than this - that I have heard she had at a former period (previous to her marriage) a connexion with a white person, a Capt. ---, which I have no doubt was broken off when she became seriously impressed with religion. But, at any rate, such connexions are so common, I might almost say universal, in our slave colonies, that except by the missionaries and a few serious persons, they are considered, if faults at all, so very venial as

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<sup>67</sup> Joan Grant, 'Call Loud', *Trouble and Strife*, 14 (1988), 9-12 (p. 12).

<sup>68</sup> Macqueen, p. 750.

<sup>69</sup> Pringle, *Mary Prince*, p. 27.

scarcely to deserve the name of immorality. Mr. Wood knows the colonial estimate of such connexions as well as I do; and, however false such an estimate must be allowed to be, especially when applied to their own conduct by persons of education, pretending to adhere to the pure Christian rule of morals, -- yet when he ascribes to a negro slave, to whom legal marriage was denied, such great criminality for laxity of this sort, and professes to be so exceedingly shocked and amazed at the tale he himself relates, he must, I am confident, have had a farther object in view than the information of Mr. Taylor or Sir Patrick Ross. He must, it is evident, have been aware that his letter would be sent to Mr. Allen, and accordingly adapted it, as more important documents from the colonies are often adapted, *for effect in England*.<sup>70</sup>

The chief aim of this frank admission is to point out Mr. Wood's hypocrisy, but the open assertion that sexual mores differ vastly in slave colonies from England does not damage Pringle's case, for the assumption is that such mores are caused by colonial circumstance and the system of slavery itself. If Christians in England found such mores morally repugnant, they should attack their cause. Furthermore, Pringle blames any possible misconduct of Prince's on her owners: 'how strong a plea of palliation might not the poor negro bring, by adducing the neglect of her various owners to afford religious instruction or moral discipline, and the habitual influence of their evil *example* (to say the very least,) before her eyes? [...] All things considered, it is indeed wonderful to find her such as she now is. But as she has herself piously expressed it, "the God whom then she knew not mercifully preserved her for better things".'<sup>71</sup> In this way, the owners are debased by the system of slavery more than the slaves, for the slaves are open to redemption by God, whereas the owners are hypocrites who have sold their Christian 'birthright' to redemption, because their moral conduct dismisses them from taking part in the 'civilising mission' (setting a

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<sup>70</sup> Joseph Phillips, in supplement to *Mary Prince*, p. 32.

<sup>71</sup> Pringle, *Mary Prince*, p. 35n.

good example, in Pringle's terms).<sup>72</sup> Finally, however, Pringle returns to the point that Mary's character and reputation are not the most critical issues:

But after all, Mary's character, important though its exculpation be to her, is not really the point of chief practical interest in this case. Suppose all Mr. Wood's defamatory allegations to be true - suppose him to be able to rake up against her out of the records of the Antigua police, or from the veracious testimony of his brother colonists, twenty stories as bad or worse than what he insinuates - suppose the whole of her own statement to be false, and even the whole of her conduct since she came under our observation to be a tissue of hypocrisy; - suppose all this - and leave the negro woman as black in character as in complexion, - yet it would not affect the main facts.<sup>73</sup>

And the main fact is simply that Mr. Wood refuses to free her in order to punish her. Mary's virtues or vices, therefore, says Pringle, should not be taken into account when considering the issue of her slavery. Ferguson speaks of Pringle's 'desire to launder or morally and psychologically simplify the *History*.'<sup>74</sup> Surely, if Pringle had wanted to do so, he would simply have edited controversial topics out of Prince's narrative before publishing it, which he specifically claimed not to have done. Rather, Pringle avoided lengthy discussion of Prince's sexual conduct in his own notes (though he does mention it) firstly to protect her, and secondly because it was beside the point he was making, other than serving as proof that slavery itself drove slaves to sexual profligacy.

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72 Compare the final six lines of Pringle's sonnet, 'The Caffer' (1827):

He is a Robber? - True; it is a strife  
Between the black-skinned bandit and the white.  
A Savage? - Yes; though loth to aim at life,  
Evil for evil fierce he doth requite.  
A Heathen? - Teach him, then, thy better creed,  
Christian! if thou deserv'st that name indeed.

In Pereira and Chapman, p. 68.

73 Pringle, *Mary Prince*, p. 35.

74 Ferguson (1987), p. 14.

Pringle, writing to Fairbairn in Cape Town, says the following: 'Do you see how Macqueen is abusing me in Blackwood's? I will ere long reply to his misinterpretations (not to his abuse) in a fourth edition of "The History of Mary Prince." Meanwhile I am prosecuting him for libel. Abuse is what we must all expect & in truth it is a distinction to be thus calumniated in such a cause.'<sup>75</sup> The precise historical truth of Mary Prince's life, and the arguments surrounding it, will never be known. What we can take at face value, and what was a truth for Pringle at the heart of this passionate debate, is Prince's statement on behalf of her fellow slaves: 'All slaves want to be free -- to be free is very sweet' (p. 23).

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<sup>75</sup> Pringle to Fairbairn, FB:I:144, 31 December 1831.

## 6.2: *Pangola, An African Tale*

Whereas Pringle attempts to reflect Mary Prince's narrative as accurately as possible, *Pangola* is an obvious fictionalisation of another ex-slave's story.<sup>76</sup> It is Pringle's only known short story, and of particular interest because he records the incidents on which the story was based in his letters to Fairbairn, and in the *Narrative*.

In the *Narrative*, Pringle states that 'a band of native banditti' composed of 'wild' and 'tame' Bushmen (as they are termed), as well as some runaway slaves and deserters from the Cape Corps were active in the Neutral Ground [which bordered on the Pringle's settlement] while he was on the frontier.<sup>77</sup> They were led by a Bushman named Dragoener who had fled from the service of Pringle's neighbour Diederik Muller after he had been flogged by one of Diederik's kinsmen.<sup>78</sup> The band posed a severe threat to the Dutch, British and Mulatto colonists in terms of stock thefts, which Pringle details. In their defence, he says that these 'freebooters' might have had a good case against the colony, for the injustices committed against them, but, nevertheless, that some action had to be taken against them: 'But however guilty the colony may have been in pursuing a system of injustice and oppression which had, directly or indirectly, driven most of these unhappy outlaws to their present mode of life, it was obvious that their predatory career could not be allowed to continue.' Consequently, Pringle 'wrote to the landdrost, urging that some plan should if possible be devised, combining protection to the colonists with mercy to the outlaws,

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76 *Pangola, An African Tale* was first published in Thomas Roscoe's *The Remembrance* (London: 1831). My references are to the reprinted text in Pereira and Chapman, pp. 159-164.

77 All references to the *Narrative* version are to be found in pp. 222-223.

78 Pringle's wife, Margaret, had a servant called Vytjè Dragoener, whom Pringle describes in his notes to 'The Emigrant's Cabin' in *African Sketches*. He does not say, however, whether or not she was related to this Dragoener. See Pereira and Chapman, p. 96.



for putting an end to this state of things.' Commandos were duly set up, with the following result:

At length they were surrounded in one of their fastnesses on the Koonap river by a strong party of military and burgher militia, and summoned to surrender. But their leaders, either having no hope of pardon, or determined rather to perish than return to servitude, refused to capitulate, and made a desperate attempt to break through the environing force. One or two, it is said, succeeded; but Dragoener and most of his boldest comrades being slain, the rest were taken prisoners, and the band effectually broken up.

From a letter sent to Fairbairn in 1825, just after he had ordered the commando, we can see that a massacre of these people is exactly what Pringle did not want:

The Bushmen on the Kounap continue to plague us - ungrateful Schelms! even after I have celebrated them in song. They stole all my brother's riding horses last week & severely wounded a Bastaard Hottentot with poisoned arrows. So I have declared war against them & have this day written to the Landdrost for a Commando to attack them in their rocky dens. You see <sup>^</sup>how back Settlers grow all savage & bloody by coming in continual collision with savages. However I have requested to have the wretches blockaded not massacred.<sup>79</sup>

Pringle is concerned about compromising his principles, about becoming 'savage & bloody', and attempts to mitigate the action by insisting that the Bushmen are not to be massacred. Fairbairn, however, obviously disagreed with Pringle's call for a commando, as is plain in a letter sent to him by Pringle just over a month later:

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79 FB:I:52A-B, Bavians River, 29 June 1825.

Your denunciations against my Bushman Commandos do not alarm me. There is no "damn'd spot" on my hands. But I am no quaker to turn my cheek to the smiter - & if attacked will resist even to slaying him then approve who he may [sic]. But in regard to these poor wretches though many of them are murderers I pity far more than blame them & in letters to the Landdrost on the subject have thrown out a warning almost a threat about bloodshed.<sup>80</sup>

In the event, however, the banditti were killed, an occurrence which obviously affected Pringle, indirectly responsible as he was:

However our party had no hand in attacking them. That was done by Captain Massey & the Field Cornets. I wanted them taken alive but it is said they refused & defended themselves desperately. 5 men were killed.

Some of the Hottentot Dragoons & horses were wounded severely by their poisoned arrows.

Those wars occurred during my visit to Graaff Reinet. ---- Why has the Gov<sup>t</sup> not established missions among the Bushmen? or taken some other means to reclaim them from savage & predatory habits? At present they have scarcely any choice but of predatory warfare & precarious existence or of servitude to the Boors. The only country they have is the desert & the best parts even of it are taken from them. Is the vindictive temper they exhibit in such circumstances to be wondered at? - And yet to us who are exposed to their attacks their hostility is no joke. They often carry off more cattle or sheep than they can use or conceal & in such cases they invariably kill the animals. There are spots in the woods entirely covered with the bones of hundreds of sheep & oxen they have slaughtered & left to the vultures.

I mean to write a Bushman Tale in prose some day. Their character & situation are curious. They remind me strongly of the Children of the Mist.<sup>81</sup>

'The Children of the Mist' were a Highland clan, the MacEaghs, who are featured in Scott's *Rob Roy* (1818) and *The Legend of Montrose* (1819). They were a clan who were 'outlawed and persecuted [...] and every man's hand being turned against them, their hand was of course directed against every man.'<sup>82</sup> Pringle, then, had no

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80 FB:I:56D, Graaff Reinet, 5 August 1825.

81 FB:I:88A-B, Eildon, 22 September 1825.

82 Introduction to *The Legend of Montrose*.

difficulty identifying Bushmen with Highland Scots (see chapter three). *Pangola* is that promised story, inspired by 'The Children of the Mist', published in London some six years after the events surrounding the Bushman commando had taken place.

The tale starts by claiming that Pangola was the herdsman of Diederik Kruger (not Muller). Pangola (Dragoener), according to the story, was orphaned in early boyhood by a commando which slaughtered his family. He was given in servitude to Diederik, who was nevertheless kind-hearted and 'much more humane to his swarthy dependants than most persons of his class.'<sup>83</sup> Pangola married a Hottentot woman. One day, however, he offended one of Kruger's kinsmen, who started to insult him. Pangola was enraged: 'His dark eyes flashed; and he told the furious Van Bronkhorst to his beard that he was a *man* as well as he; that God had made them equal; and though the white man had seized the land, and enforced the labour of his countrymen, yet no law either of God or man had condemned them to submit to indignities which even the slaves of the Christians would not tamely endure.'<sup>84</sup> He was severely lashed 'till his back and limbs were miserably mangled and streaming with blood' for his insubordination. From that time, he cherished a 'deep hatred' in his heart against the colonists, and fled 'into the wilderness' at the first opportunity, 'abandoning even his wife and children.'

In the wilderness, he became leader of a band of fugitives who began to despoil the 'oppressors of his race' of their cattle and horses. 'These depredations excited great indignation among the frontier Colonists; and many successive parties were called out by the veld-cornets to pursue and hunt down Pangola - but for a long time without success.'<sup>85</sup> Pangola evades these commandos 'for several years' [an obvious

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83 *Pangola*, p. 159. Compare the enslaved 'Hottentot' in *Thompson's Travels* whose 'dark eye flashes not' owing to his state of degradation [see chapter five].

84 *Pangola*, p. 160.

85 *Pangola*, p. 160. Pringle elides any mention of his own involvement.

extension of the truth by Pringle]. Eventually, however, after several of Pangola's men had been captured during a commando, Diederik approaches, alone, the impregnable fastness to which Pangola had retreated. They parley 'on the opposite sides of a block of granite, which in former ages had rolled from the mountain ridge, and now lay like an altar of reconciliation between the Christian and the Bushman.'<sup>86</sup> Diederik attempts to persuade Pangola to surrender, but he refuses with an impassioned speech:

'Nay, *myn baas!*' replied the Bushman, 'the past can never be forgotten. That day, when I lay prostrate under the *agter-os-Sjambok*, - you and your kinsman Bronkhorst may forget it, but I, never. Never more shall I cringe under the white man's lash; never more eat the bread he offers, embittered by his contempt. Hunger, thirst, nakedness, I can bear as my forefathers have borne. I can live like the wild hound of the desert; but not like the household dog of your kraals, to be fed, and scorned, and fettered, and beaten at your pleasure. Your commandos have indeed dispersed my tribe and destroyed my kindred; but the wilderness and its wild freedom are still my heritage, and I will never yield them again but with my life.'<sup>87</sup>

Kruger retreats with the commando and prisoners, after promising Pangola that his wife and children would come to no harm. The prisoners, however, are less lucky, and are all condemned to servitude or death. Pangola, however, hears of this and attempts to rescue the prisoners, which he succeeds in doing by means of a daring attack. With the extra firearms and ammunition gained, his band grows, as does the determination of the colonial government to extirpate him. Bushman spies are employed, and Pangola's men are eventually cornered in a cavern by a commando containing Van Bronkhorst (Kruger's kinsman who had originally whipped Pangola). One of the Bushman spies is forced at gunpoint by the veld-cornet into the cavern to inform Pangola that his retreat was cut off and that he should surrender. The spy is

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<sup>86</sup> *Pangola*, p. 161.

<sup>87</sup> *Pangola*, p. 161.

sent out with an arrow through each cheek, their poisoned barbs infixed in his tongue, for having betrayed the group.<sup>88</sup> A ferocious battle ensues, in which Pangola is mortally wounded. He sallies forth from the cave, however, leaps on Van Bronkhorst, and stabs him twice in the throat with his poisoned assagai: “Now, old wolf, we are quits,” he exclaimed, flinging down his bloody weapon; “here ends your hunt of Pangola. A hasty half hour will make us both food for the Aasvogel”.<sup>89</sup> Only five men and a few women and children of the band are left to surrender. Over twenty have been killed [the actual number in Pringle’s letter was five men]. An officer offers to examine Pangola’s wound, but he refuses, choosing to die heroically:

‘You cannot save my life, if you would,’ he said; ‘and, if you could, I should receive it back only to be doomed, by laws which I disclaim, to a more ignominious death. I die in arms against the Christians - the murderous Christians who destroyed my race. I have repaid some of my wrongs - I have slain my old oppressor - I have shown an example to my countrymen - and now let me die without disturbance.’<sup>90</sup>

Pringle wrote his poem ‘Song of the Wild Bushman’ in early September 1825 (see chapter four), after he had called out the commando, but only a few weeks before Dragoener was killed.<sup>91</sup> The poem, it seems, is another version of the Dragoener story, though obviously written before his death, as the final verse shows:

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88 Pringle, it seems, felt his own ‘betrayal’ of the group at this moment.

89 *Pangola*, p. 164. An aasvogel is a vulture.

90 *Pangola*, p. 164. Pangola’s final speech strongly resembles that of Ranald MacEagh in *The Legend of Montrose* (1819; Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1995), (chapter 22), p. 172.

91 See FB:I:88. It was during the period that Pringle wrote his ‘Sonnet to Oppression’ and had his critical meeting with John Philip.



12. BUSHMAN'S KRANTZ, BAVIAANS RIVER (25 Jan. 1849). Oil.





12. BUSHMAN'S KRANTZ, BAVIAANS RIVER (25 Jan. 1849). Oil.

Thus I am lord of the Desert Land,  
 And will not leave my bounds,  
 To crouch beneath the Christian's hand,  
 And kennel with his hounds:  
 To be a hound, and watch the flocks,  
 30 For the cruel White Man's gain -  
 No! the brown Serpent of the Rocks  
 His den doth yet retain;  
 And none who there his sting provokes,  
 Shall find its poison vain!

Pringle, therefore, hoped that the Bushman would be able to resist the commando he had called, that his poison would not be 'vain!' In life, unfortunately, it did not prove to be. *Pangola* can be read, therefore, as Pringle's attempt to exorcise his own guilt and to use his own pen as a poisoned barb in defence of the oppressed, even though he had been complicitous with the oppressors. Two years later, in 1827, the 'Bushman' in the sonnet of the same name, is actually killed by the 'thundering gun' and leaves his sons a curse on the 'Christian race'. One can only speculate about the extent to which the events of August and September 1825 changed Pringle's attitudes, but whether it was a sense of guilt, or an identification with a defiant Bushman, holed up in a cavern, just as Pringle had retreated to his settlement at the time in battle against the colonial government and surrounded by hostile neighbours, his later writings and actions in the service of humanity frequently attempt to atone for his action. In a passage often quoted by Pringle's biographers and critics, written on 13 August 1825, just before writing 'Song of the Wild Bushman', he says to Fairbairn: 'Whether it may be my lot to return to active life or to vegetate & die in the deserts which now afford me asylum my determination is to "oppose & thwart" to the utmost of my humble powers oppression & humbug wherever I meet them.'<sup>92</sup> Significantly, he followed this by: 'Write me fully in regard to all that passes between you & the Commissioners.

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92 FB:I:62G

I shall leave this now in a few days on my return to my den.' [Pringle's emphasis] In 'Evening Rambles' (1828) Pringle admits what happened to the Bushman in his den when he refers to the Bushman's cave on his own farm as 'His fortress once, and now his grave' (line 56).<sup>93</sup>

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93 One can only imagine the conflicting emotions in Pringle's mind when he entered this cave in 1825. When Thomas Baines visited it in 1849 he made the following note. He describes the cave 'on the upper part of which, far beyond the reach of the Bushman's pencil, appeared legibly written in white paint the letters 'T Pringle 1825'. Thomas Baines, *Journal of a Residence in Africa 1842-1853*, ed. by R. F. Kennedy (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1961), vol. 1, p. 116.

### 6.3: The Abolition of Slavery

On 28 August 1833 the act of parliament abolishing slavery was finally passed, though slavery itself was only formally abolished on 1 August 1834, five days after a document containing the Act of Abolition, signed by Pringle, had been published. In August 1833, Pringle felt a great sense of euphoria, but the immense effort the abolitionists had spent on the cause was beginning to take its toll:

However[,] whatever be the defects of the Bill, the great work is done. And now, the work accomplished, heaven is taking the workmen fast from among us. Wilberforce is departed. Clarkson is both blind & lame, & cannot hold out long. Macaulay is busting up fast, & what Buxton said to me some years [sic] may soon be realized. I was expressing apprehensions about Macaulay's health: "He's beginning to get feeble," said Buxton: "but Macaulay will live till Slavery is abolished, then he will go out like the snuff of a taper." And it looks like it.<sup>94</sup>

In addition, Pringle must have been aware that with the abolition of slavery his livelihood would not be secure.<sup>95</sup> Some of his friends had similar concerns on his behalf, and when Thomas Buxton told Pringle in August 1833 that the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lord Brougham, was anxious that he should be provided with some 'competent appointment', he wrote to Brougham expressing a desire for a civic appointment at the Cape.<sup>96</sup> Elsewhere, he wrote that he would prefer to stay in England if something useful could be found for him to do, that is, something 'which would admit of my devoting a portion of my time to the service of humanity, in which I consider myself solemnly enlisted for life.'<sup>97</sup> Failing that, he would be able to do most good at the Cape which 'next to [his] native country, has the strongest claim

94 FB:I:148, London, 4 November 1833.

95 Pringle's salary at the Anti-Slavery Society was cut 'with regret' to £100/annum on 5 August 1834, See Meiring, p. 150.

96 See Meiring, p. 151.

97 *ibid*.

upon me both of duty and affection.'<sup>98</sup> Freed from the exertions of the cause, and with an uncertain future ahead, Pringle began to prepare his largest work for the presses. *African Sketches* was published at the beginning of 1834.

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<sup>98</sup> *ibid.*

## 7: *African Sketches*

*African Sketches*, published in the first months of 1834, and shortly before Pringle's death, consists of two parts, *Poems Illustrative of South Africa* and *Narrative of a Residence in South Africa*. It was Pringle's avowed intention that the *Poems* and the *Narrative* be read in conjunction.<sup>1</sup> He says in the preface to *African Sketches* that the volume:

presents, in the first place, an unusual combination of Verse and Prose - not blended, but bound together, like the Siamese Twins, by a ligature which perhaps may appear equally unnecessary and unnatural. Yet in the present case, as in that of the singular human anomaly referred to, the junction, though originating in accident, will be found, on closer examination, to be of a nature so intimate, that it could scarcely be dissevered without endangering the vitality of the separate parts.<sup>2</sup>

Before considering the importance of Pringle's insistence on the links between the two sections of *African Sketches*, a characterisation of the *Narrative* itself is necessary.

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1 Pringle's advice was not heeded. *African Sketches* remains the only publication combining the *Poems* and the *Narrative*. In 1835 the two had already parted company when Edward Moxon published the new edition of the *Narrative*, together with a biographical sketch by Josiah Conder.

2 Preface to *African Sketches*, in Pereira and Chapman, p. 138.



### 7.1: *Narrative of a Residence in South Africa*

By 1834, Pringle was well acquainted with the bulk of travel writing on South Africa. He quotes frequently from the works of Barrow, Thompson, Kay, Latrobe, Lichtenstein, Sparrman, Burchell, Thunberg and Le Vaillant in his own book.<sup>3</sup> We also know that Pringle, as a young man, admired Mungo Park's *Travels in the Interior of Africa*.<sup>4</sup> Pringle, thus, had a working knowledge of a diverse group of writings which ranged from the sentimental to the strictly scientific. Given that the *Narrative* contains a miscellany of personal anecdotes, reflective and dramatic monologues, as well as naturalistic or scientific observation, political/historical segments and meticulously detailed accounts of specific instances of colonial oppression, it becomes important to ask what type of book Pringle himself intended to produce, as this can assist our characterisation of it.<sup>5</sup>

The first indication we have of Pringle's intentions is that he had already planned to write a narrative before he arrived at the Cape. Accordingly, he kept diaries and journals (all of which have been lost) and even started work on the book in 1825 when he was on the frontier. He found, however, that he was unable to continue work on it for two reasons, as he admitted in a letter to Fairbairn: 'Many of the facts I have to state may be considered libels until they are proved & it is difficult also to write with perfect candour & good temper on matters that mainly concern ourselves or friends until time has a little mellowed them. I mean therefore to lay aside my own Book for the present. It may be resumed perhaps with better effect "on some fair future day"'.<sup>6</sup>

3 He also refers to the works of Kolb, Tachert, Dapper, La Croix and Mier.

4 Josiah Conder, *A Biographical Sketch of the Late Thomas Pringle* (London: Bradbury & Evans, 1835), p. 9.

5 Voss even suggests that '*African Sketches* could be read as a tract on labour relations.' Voss (1990), p. 77.

6 FB:I:100-100A, Bavian's River, 14 October 1825. Pringle seems to have worked on the project occasionally. For instance, his articles 'Journal of a South African Emigrant', though they are similar

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This shows that Pringle originally intended his narrative to be something of an exposé of the Cape government, and its treatment of himself and Fairbairn. This already distinguishes it from many other narratives on Southern Africa which were chiefly motivated by either economic or scientific exploration, such as Sparrman and Thunberg's for the latter, and Thompson's for the former.

Pringle eventually completed his book in a great rush, aware that his health was failing. As he wrote to Alan Cunningham on May 12, 1834, after the book had already been published, 'I fear I have rather botched the book. I began to print before I had more than a couple of chapters ready - & it has swelled out of my hands into twice the size.'<sup>7</sup> He refers to the book as 'my Cape Travels, or Autobiography - or whatever it may be called.'<sup>8</sup> The latter statement demonstrates that Pringle himself was either unable to categorise the book, or unconcerned to do so. The fact that it suddenly 'swelled' is owing to the nature of its contents. The *Narrative* itself consists of a personal narrative, extracts from other writers on the Cape, reworkings of most of the articles he contributed to the *SACA*, *Oriental Herald* and *Penny Magazine* (to name but a few), extracts from his journals, letters sent to the commissioners of Enquiry and their responses, as well as a history of local peoples at the Cape and chapters containing policy guidelines for the British government on their treatment of various local groups. Considering the great range of this content, it is necessary to divide the *Narrative* into two major areas of consideration; firstly, Pringle's personal narrative, and secondly his political/historical sections.

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in content to the first chapters of the *Narrative*, still contain features of a journal, such as daily entries, incidental anecdotes, and many more Dutch words than appear in the final version. *Englishman's Magazine*, 1 (April 1831), 9-16, (June 1831), 303-311, vol. 2 (September 1831), 36-44.

<sup>7</sup> NLS 11000.f.184.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*

### 7.1.1: The personal narrative.

Pringle's personal narrative covers his experience from arrival at the Cape in 1820 to departure in 1826.<sup>9</sup> Two distinct threads run through it. The first is an attempt to describe the countryside, its people and fauna and flora. The second is to justify his own place and conduct in the Cape.<sup>10</sup>

Pringle did not wish to be repetitious in his descriptions of the Cape. Early on in the *Narrative* he declines to describe the 'magnificent mountain scenery' of Cape Town as it is 'so well known from the descriptions of numerous travellers' (p. 2). This shows his awareness of an audience demanding novelty in this field. On several occasions he describes scenery or fauna and flora when this is something new. Pringle's descriptions, however, are rarely 'scientific' or impersonal. For instance, he describes a salt lake which his party of settlers encountered on their way to their settlement as follows:

This wintry appearance of the lake formed a singular contrast with the exuberant vegetation which embowered its margins, where woods of beautiful evergreens and elegant acacias were intermingled with flowering shrubs and succulent plants of lofty size and strange exotic aspect, - such as the *Portulacaria afra* (favourite food of the elephant), the tree *crassula*, the scarlet *cotelydon*, with several species of the *aloe*, some of them of large size, and in summer crested with superb tiaras of blood-red blossoms; and, high over all, gigantic groves of euphorbia, extending their leafless arms above the far-spread forest of shrubbery. The effect of the whole, flushed with a rosy tinge by the setting sun, was singularly striking and beautiful (pp. 23-34).

The words 'wintry, embowered, beautiful, elegant, lofty, strange, exotic, crested, tiaras, blood-red, arms, flushed, rosy tinge, striking' show that Pringle was offering a

<sup>9</sup> Pringle uses the term 'person narrative' himself. For example, see *Narrative*, p. 331.

<sup>10</sup> A full analysis of the complex interaction between the two, related to Pringle's view of history, human nature and politics is an ample task for future research.

personal and poetic rendition of the scenery to the reader. Much of Pringle's scenic description is reminiscent of Alexander von Humbolt's "wild and gigantic nature"<sup>11</sup> yet its purpose is not solely to 'point out exploitable resources' for Europeans.<sup>12</sup> Pringle does this quite openly when he gives down-to-earth advice for settlers, ranging from the types of crops to grow to the prices of livestock, but his natural descriptions have the chief function of showing him as a man of sensibility and sentiment. The insertion of Latin names for various plants adds a knowledgeable, scientific touch, but also contributes to a sense of the exotic and obviates the need for otherwise detailed botanical description which might impair the force of the passage. As Pringle admits in 'Journal of a South African Emigrant', in a passage (omitted in the *Narrative*) just before the one above: 'on the botany I shall not venture to expiate, knowing well how tiresome to all but botanists are minute descriptions of this sort, and an array of barbarous technical names which add really nothing to the reader's knowledge.'<sup>13</sup> The 'knowledge' Pringle is offering the reader is, therefore, not scientific. With the plants briefly named, Pringle prefers to concentrate on the overall effect of a scene. As in much of his poetry, Pringle interacts with the scenery, allowing it to influence his emotional state, sometimes revealing his innermost doubts and fears:

The exotic aspect of the clumps of aloes and euphorbias, peeping out amidst the surrounding jungle, in the wan light of the rising moon, seeming to the excited fancy like bands of Caffer warriors crested with plumes and bristling with assagais (p. 25).

Though there is danger in this beauty, the scenery leads Pringle to reflect that he and his party 'were now indeed pilgrims in the wilds of savage Africa' (p. 25). In stark

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<sup>11</sup> See Pratt, p. 120-129.

<sup>12</sup> See Pratt, p. 130. Neither was this von Humbolt's sole purpose, to be fair.

<sup>13</sup> *Englishman's Magazine* (April 1831), p. 15.



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13 *Englishman's Magazine* (April 1831), p. 15.

contrast is the writing of Mungo Park, the 'experiential unhero' as Pratt calls him,<sup>14</sup> who wakes from a vision of 'the streams and rivers of [his] native land' of Scotland to find himself 'a lonely captive, perishing of thirst, amidst the wilds of Africa.'<sup>15</sup> Unlike in his early South African poetry, where Pringle was the exile ('The Exile's Lament') or the lonely, deserted traveller ('Afar in the Desert'), in his personal narrative he is the pilgrim, the adventurer. Pringle 'act[s] the Robinson Crusoe in a small way.'<sup>16</sup> He also characterises himself as a Border Laird, especially in Chapter VIII which is devoted to descriptions of indigenous wildlife and hunting (including reworkings of Pringle's anecdotes about lions which appeared in the *SAJ* in 1824). These stories are arresting tales of adventure and hunting, *such as* became very popular in the nineteenth century.<sup>17</sup>

Pringle, the narrator, is an active participant in all aspects of day to day frontier activity, from cabin building to hunting with his Boer neighbours. When making observations on or of particular scenes or events, his descriptions portray him both as a man of reflective sensibility and of common sense and practicality. He can be at the centre of experience, or observe events from the outside at will. This is evident in the following passage where Pringle is the observant narrator, standing outside the scene he describes, a technique he uses frequently when describing social interaction in the 'contact zone':<sup>18</sup>

The Dutch-African boors, most of them men of almost gigantic size, sat apart in their bushy *biel*, in aristocratic exclusiveness, smoking their huge pipes with self-satisfied complacency. Some of the graver emigrants were seated on the trunk of a decayed tree, conversing in broad Scotch on subjects connected with our settlement, and on the

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14 Pratt, p. 76.

15 Park, *Travels in the Interior of Africa*, p. 78.

16 A sentimental hero. See Pratt, p. 47.

17 Pringle, nevertheless, downplays the threat which various animals pose to settler life, and expresses his concern that several species were diminishing in numbers owing to over hunting.

18 See Pratt, p. 6.

comparative merits of long and short-horned cattle (the horns of the native oxen, by the way, are enormous): and the livelier young men and servant lads were standing around the Hottentots, observing their merry pranks, or practising with them a lesson of mutual tuition in their respective dialects; while the awkward essays at pronunciation on either side supplied a fund of ceaseless entertainment. Conversation appeared to go on with alacrity, though neither party understood scarcely a syllable of the other's language; while a sly rogue Bushman sat behind, all the while, mimicking, to the very life, each of us in succession (p. 25).

This homely, evocative style of description, showing Pringle's keen eye for detail in social interactions, is a hallmark of the *Narrative*, along with his frequent genial asides, his honest and seemingly unguarded prose style. In contrast to Barrow's work, there is no 'denial of coevalness,'<sup>19</sup> as all the characters interact in the same milieu and time frame. Though Pringle is also part of the event he describes, he is not the central focus of it, nor a sentimental anti-hero like Park. In much of the *Narrative*, Pringle is writing more as a novelist in the style of Scott, than a travel writer *per se*. For instance, he blends snatches of dialogue and detailed descriptions of individual character's clothing and demeanour, etc., into the narrative of his own activities and the project of describing the country. It is this impulse which allows him, even if for purposes of humour, to note the mimicry of the 'sly rogue Bushman' which now constitutes an early record of colonial mimicry.

When he embarked on the *Narrative*, Pringle was also a seasoned anti-slavery propagandist and often intensifies his rhetoric, thus introducing yet another style of writing into the book. He does this most often in order to evoke pathos in the reader, particularly when he describes instances of colonial injustice.<sup>20</sup> A good example of

19 See Pratt, p. 64, who is quoting Johannes Fabian.

20 See also Pringle's harrowing account of the jail he discovered at Beaufort in the Karoo, *Narrative*, pp. 167-170.

this is the vignette or portrait of a Caffer woman who was about to be sold into slavery because she had crossed the frontier without permission:

While the constable was delivering his message, the Caffer woman looked at him and at us with keen and intelligent glances; and though she imperfectly understood his language, she appeared fully to comprehend its import. When he had finished, she stepped forward, drew up her figure to its full height, extended her right arm, and commenced a speech in her native tongue - the Amakosa dialect. Though I did not understand a single word she uttered, I have seldom been more struck with surprise and admiration. The language, to which she gave full and forcible intonation, was highly musical and sonorous; her gestures were natural, graceful, and impressive, and her dark eyes and handsome bronze countenance were full of eloquent expression. Sometimes she pointed back towards her own country, and then to her children. Sometimes she raised her tones aloud, and shook her clenched hand, as if she denounced our injustice, and threatened us with the vengeance of her tribe. Then again she would melt into tears, as if imploring clemency, and mourning for her helpless little ones. [...] I was not a little struck by the scene, and could not help beginning to suspect that my European countrymen, who thus made captives of harmless women and children, were in reality greater barbarians than the savage natives of Caffraria (p. 16).

Pringle's portraits of the oppressed are stylised, but characterised by his attempt to give voice to the people involved, to tell their stories. In this instance, he admits that he had no idea exactly what the woman was saying, but, nevertheless, uses her as his own mouthpiece for an expression of the injustice being done towards her. In doing so, however, he does not restrict her to a single response, but offers a range of emotion from supplication to a threat of vengeance. This, in turn, provokes a reflection on the 'civilisation' and, hence, the right to 'civilise' or exploit, of the European, which is a theme of the *Narrative*, and absent in most other contemporary travel literature. Furthermore, Pringle includes himself in this group when he says '*my European countrymen*', just as the Bushman mocks '*each of us in succession.*' [*my italics*]. In most cases, Pringle shows how he is influenced, emotionally, mentally, or even practically, by the characters he describes. This is a notable development from his

early notes concerning gypsies (which were used by Scott) (see chapter two) where he is a dispassionate observer storing up the 'raw materials of literature.' In the *Narrative*, Pringle's ethnographic portraits and scenic descriptions affect him personally. They can, thus, justifiably be called an element of his personal narrative.

The second major aspect of Pringle's personal narrative is a well-considered defence of his political and editorial activities in Cape Town, which, of course, involved Somerset.<sup>21</sup> This section is concentrated in Chapter X.<sup>22</sup> Here, the *Narrative* becomes more of a legal and personal defence. The length and frequency of the footnotes suddenly increases, and the fluency of the narrative is correspondingly reduced. Pringle, however, was obviously still personally embittered that he had not been compensated, and his old animosity towards Somerset enlivens the chapter, as when he is summoned to appear before Lord Charles:

There was a storm on his brow, and it burst forth at once upon me like a long-gathered south-easter from Table Mountain. "So, Sir!" he began - "you are one of those who dare to insult me, and oppose my government!" - and he launched forth into a long tirade of abuse; scolding, upbraiding, and taunting me, - with all the domineering arrogance of mien and sneering insolence of expression of which he was so great a master - reproaching me above all for my *ingratitude* for his personal favours. While he thus addressed me, in the most insulting style, I felt my frame tremble with indignation; but I saw that the Chief Justice was placed there for a witness of my demeanour, and that my destruction was sealed if I gave way to feelings, and was not wary in my words. I stood up, however, and confronted this most arrogant man with a look under which his haughty eye instantly sunk, and replied to him with a calmness of which I had not, a few minutes before, thought myself capable. [...] Lord Charles then saw he had gone a step too far. He had, in fact, misapprehended my character, and had made a not uncommon mistake, in taking a certain bashfulness of manner (*mauvaise honte*) for timidity of spirit (pp. 189-190).

21 The reader might be interested to compare the narrative of the Dutch official Max Havelaar. *Multatuli - Max Havelaar (or the coffee auctions of the Dutch trading company)* (1860; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987). Eduard Douwes Dekker/Havelaar was also seeking compensation, but from the Dutch government, and was an avid reformer. His book is a stinging indictment of Dutch colonialism in the East and the excesses of colonial government.

22 The practical and legal details of his battle with Somerset have been discussed in detail by Meiring, pp. 87-105.

By the time of writing the *Narrative* Pringle had already established his reputation as a philanthropist and dogged fighter for justice and abolition of slavery. He uses his own case as a particular example of colonial injustice (as he did with Mary Prince and slavery) and extends it to a general indictment of the government. Here the *Narrative* becomes more of a political tract than a travel journal. Pringle stresses that it was the entire system of autocratic government at the Cape that allowed 'despots' like Somerset free reign. He urges for the application of British law to all colonies for the protection of their citizens. At least, when he wrote the *Narrative*, Pringle had the satisfaction that Somerset was gone, and the old system was changing:

Tyrannical and vindictive as he was, I have little doubt that much of what was then said and done, and of which Lord Charles Somerset got the credit, was said and done without his knowledge or beyond his intention. But such will be the case under a system of government such as he had organised, and to which he pertinaciously clung till it crumbled beneath his grasp and crushed him in its ruins (p. 199).



### 7.1.2: The *Narrative* and politics

After Chapter X, Pringle narrates his accident at Genadendal as well as his travels on the frontier in search of information for the Commissioners of Inquiry. This is where the personal narrative ends, as did Pringle's residence at the Cape. The remaining four chapters (XII-XV) disrupt the autobiographical time scale of the book. They 'are largely concerned with outlining the history of relations between coloured races and the white man in South Africa, well documented from published and unpublished sources accessible to the author, and brought right up to April 1834, the time of writing.'<sup>23</sup> This part of the *Narrative* is thus a 'Research', rather than a travel narrative.<sup>24</sup> As Pereira and Chapman point out, however, 'while he retained his belief in Christianity as a regenerative force in South Africa, Pringle shows a rare respect for the customs and aspirations of the indigenous inhabitants. In avoiding the unremitting polemic of books such as Philip's *Researches in South Africa* he sees the more variegated human story. Although he is harsh in his condemnation of colonial policies and practices, Pringle is always prepared to distinguish between enlightened and despotic behaviour in individuals, whether black or white, British or Boer.'<sup>25</sup> Pringle also makes his opinions clear in these chapters on almost every topic relating to colonial life which he discusses, a tactic which angered many colonists.<sup>26</sup>

23 A. M. Lewin Robinson, introduction to *Narrative*, p. xvi.

24 *African Sketches* was certainly used as a political document, for instance, Rev J Beecham's report for Lord Glenelg was drawn chiefly from it. Pringle's policies also influenced Buxton. For further details see P. H. Kapp, *Dr John Philip: Die Grondlegger van Liberalisme in Suid Afrika* (Pretoria: State Printers, 1985), pp. 45, 194, 284.

25 Pereira and Chapman, p. xxvi.

26 This is obvious in a review of Pringle's *African Sketches*, published in the *Graham's Town Journal* (January 1835), p. 158: 'Not the most zealous 'Makanna' nor the most ferocious Kafir chief [...] could have spirited up his countrymen to the remorseless warfare of revenge and extermination more effectually or more earnestly than has this ungrateful viper, Mr. Thomas Pringle.' See also W. M. Macmillan, *Bantu, Boer, and Briton: the Making of the South African Native Problem*, 2nd edn (Oxford: OUP, 1963), pp. 51-52.

Given Pringle's involvement in the anti-slavery cause, one might expect the theme of slavery to dominate the book. As abolition was about to be achieved when the book was published (in fact, slavery was abolished on 1 ~~August~~ 1834), he says that he has no need to 'repeat the humiliating and revolting narrative' of slavery (p. 218). The effects of slavery, however, had still to be countered, and Pringle demonstrates in Chapter XIII how the granting of land (the Kat River settlement) and weapons to a group of newly emancipated Hottentots, along with 'the full rights of free men - placed by law in all respects upon a level with the white colonists' had, in effect, made them good citizens 'without any preparation (except what a *few* had received at missionary institutions)' (p. 263). Here Pringle recognises that land, weapons and equality before the law are keys to moral improvement, and not of necessity the missionary institutions. This recognition reflects his Scottish Enlightenment notion that the mode of subsistence determines the nature of a society.

Also of grave concern to him were the 'legalised butcheries' of the Bushmen, and the atrocities committed by commandos.<sup>27</sup> Here, Pringle vests his hope in the British government, as he is convinced of 'the utter futility of looking for any effectual change of system from any power *within* the colony.'<sup>28</sup> The commando system must end, he continues, otherwise there will be dire consequences:

The frontier colonists, be they Dutch or British, *must* of necessity continue to be semi-barbarians, so long as the *commando system* - the system of hostile reprisals - shall be encouraged or connived at; and so long as the colonists are permitted to make encroachments on the territory and the natural rights of the natives, the colony can never have a safe or a settled frontier. Mutual enmity and reciprocal outrage will proceed as heretofore. The weak will gradually melt away before the strong; tribe after tribe will be extirpated as their brethren have been extirpated; and year after year, while we continue to *talk* of our boundless benevolence and our Christian philanthropy, fresh loads of

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<sup>27</sup> See *Narrative*, p. 229.

<sup>28</sup> *Narrative*, p. 230. This sentiment naturally alienated him from many colonists, especially those seeking home rule (in later years) and a Cape parliament.

that guilt which the Almighty has denounced in awful terms - the blood-stained guilt of *oppression*, will continue to accumulate upon our heads as a nation (p. 231).<sup>29</sup>

Pringle characterises oppression not only in terms of murder, but also in terms of encroachment on land and natural rights. Repaying Europe's guilt, thus, is not simply to be achieved by verbal philanthropy.

Chapter XIV contains a brief description and history of the Caffers, as well as several well-documented accounts of massacres committed by the English and Boers against them. Pringle was clearly outraged, and criticises all who took part. He calls directly for 'JUSTICE and REDRESS' 'for the injured African' (p. 299), and stresses that all whites in South Africa are to blame, including 'some of the British settlers, I grieve and blush to say, and those not exclusively of the lowest orders' (p. 302). Pringle also details how the Caffers should be treated. In his blueprint for benign and paternalistic colonialism, he tries to tackle the issue of land rights:

Restore to such of the frontier chiefs as have equitable claims upon it, all that is not irretrievably alienated of the Neutral or Ceded Territory. They will gratefully receive it on our own terms. Give it back to them, to be held of the Colonial Government, and settled on a plan somewhat analogous to that of the Kat River; reserving, however, to the chiefs certain rights of seignior over the respective domains allotted to their clans, such as would enable them to maintain their hereditary rank and influence, without having the power of oppressing vassals. This would tend to preserve the native aristocracy of the country and the existing relations of society, and would greatly promote order and good government. These *Colonial* Chiefs might be appointed field-commandants over their respective clans. [...] These Caffer settlers, after a probationary period, might be entrusted with fire-arms, in the same manner as the Hottentots of the Kat River, and all the male adults might be embodied as a militia for the defence of the frontier. Place confidence in these people, and they will be loyal to the colony, as the Hottentots have been loyal. Missionaries should be liberally encouraged to settle among them, and schools founded and endowed in

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29 Pringle foresees 'a *savage* war - a war of extermination!' 'if we do drive [the Caffers] to that extremity,' *Narrative*, p. 311.

every village. Lastly, the colonial laws should be extended to a certain fixed and well-defined boundary [...].

With respect to the tribes and clans beyond the colonial boundary, let a system of just and honourable dealing, upon terms of fair reciprocity, be established and strictly adhered to. Let a general Convention of all the chiefs west of the Kei river be solemnly assembled; and let an equitable plan for the restoration of stolen cattle, for the redress of mutual grievances, and for the regulation of commerce, be proposed for their adoption. [...] Let a just and simple code of international law be drawn up and translated into the Amakosa language; and get the chiefs to affix their signatures to it, and to concur in giving it prompt and firm execution. Insist on strict and speedy justice being executed on all convicted offenders; but cease to punish the innocent for the guilty. Let the Caffers see clearly that we are resolved henceforth neither to *do* nor to *endure* wrong; and I will venture to predict that we shall have all, except a few habitual rogues *on both sides* of the boundary, zealously devoted to the support of an equitable frontier system (pp. 316-318).

Pringle sees similarities between Scottish clans and African tribes and assumes, by analogy, that the societal and governmental system he advocates for the Caffers is both workable and appropriate, if protected by the law. If, he says, 'the *principle*' of this approach is followed, it would not be surprising 'if we should see the tribes beyond the frontier earnestly soliciting to be received under the protection of the colony, or to be embraced within its limits and jurisdiction' (p. 320). It is within this context that Pringle's vision of future colonialism should be read:

The Native Tribes, in short, are ready to throw themselves into our arms. Let us open our arms cordially to embrace them as MEN and BROTHERS. Let us enter upon a new and nobler career of conquest. Let us subdue savage Africa by JUSTICE, by KINDNESS, by the talisman of CHRISTIAN TRUTH. Let us *thus* go forth, in the name and under the blessing of God, gradually to extend the moral influence, and, if it be thought desirable, the territorial boundary also of our Colony, until it shall become an empire - embracing Southern Africa from the Keisi and Gareep to Mozambique and Cape Negro - and to which, peradventure, in after days, even the equator shall prove no ultimate limit (p. 321).<sup>30</sup>

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30 Kloppe says that 'Pringle's argument is probably one of the earliest justifications for the territorial expansion of the British Empire in Africa.' p. 30.

Pringle's view of colonialism here is paternalistic, but also extremely qualified. It relies on a pattern of expanding feudal alliances once known in the Scottish Highlands. His vision is largely devoid of imperialistic jingoism and military force. Pringle's statement above is often quoted out of context, where it can be interpreted as a precursor of Cecil John Rhodes' 'Cape to Cairo' vision. But Pringle qualifies it even further. He states that there are many other factors necessary to achieve his goals, besides the principles he advocates, which the colony needed to get in order, including law and legislation, education, a liberal press and the 'tone of Sentiment and standard of Morals among the several classes of the community' (p. 322), a very tall order. Pringle admits that dealing properly with these subjects would require 'at least a separate chapter, which would have extended the book to two volumes' (p. 323).<sup>31</sup> He also fears that some of his remarks would seem 'obsolete' owing to the lapse of time since his 'personal observations' were made and the 'continual state of change, both political and social, that had recently prevailed in the colony' (p. 323). Thus, rather than being wildly speculative, the *Narrative* remains a reflection of South Africa and its peoples at a given period in its history, always striving for accuracy of fact and detail. Indeed, it is Pringle's regard for 'truth' which underlies the entire work. In a footnote he makes a distinction between fiction and fact:

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31 To Fairbairn, Pringle writes that he regrets that he did not do so, 'for the Caffer Case has led me on & on to such a length that the book is far too thick & crowded with small type,' FB:I:150A, London, 22 May, 1834.

The story of Makanna, originally published by me in the New Monthly Magazine for January, 1827, has furnished an anonymous writer with the subject of a romance, which has just appeared. The author displays considerable powers of imagination and command of language, but I am constrained by a regard for the truth to add, that, independently of the strange absurdities of the plot, and of the liberties taken with history and geography, the descriptions of South-African scenery and manners given in this work do not bear even a remote resemblance to the reality (p. 288).<sup>32</sup>

Marie Louise Pratt draws a distinction between sentimental and scientific modes of travel writing, the sentimental narrator appearing as a whole body in the centre of events, the scientific narrator as a disembodied I/eye on the periphery.<sup>33</sup> Pringle blends the two, attempting on the one hand to influence the reader emotionally in the sentimental mode, while striving on the other hand for accuracy of fact and detail with regard to South Africa, its peoples, and the crimes and malpractices committed there. Given this diversity in the *Narrative*, how, then, does Pringle consider his *Poems* to be 'bound' to the *Narrative*, considering that they deal with a multitude of topics, are written in several different styles, and were composed over a period of approximately twelve years?<sup>34</sup>

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32 The book is *Makanna, or The Land of the Savage* (London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1834), Anon..

33 Pratt, p. 78.

34 See Voss's (1990) limited classification of some of the poems according to style and metre, related to content, p. 75.



## 7.2: Poems Illustrative of South Africa

Pringle considered the verse and prose sections of *African Sketches* as 'not blended, but bound together,' the 'junction [...] of a nature so intimate, that it could scarcely be dissevered without endangering the vitality of the separate parts.' He also says that the reader should peruse the *Narrative* first, even though the verse was placed first in order, 'an arrangement arising from accident rather than design.' 'By this means he will have the advantage of obtaining such a familiar knowledge of the country, its scenery, its inhabitants, and political condition, as will render the local allusions in the Poems perfectly intelligible without continual reference to the explanatory Notes.'<sup>35</sup> *African Sketches* is, therefore, clearly targeted at a non South African readership. More importantly, however, Pringle saw his poems as illustrations or sketches, not dreams or fantasies, of South Africa in its entirety, including its scenery, inhabitants and politics. Indeed, Pringle's copious footnotes to the poems, and frequent cross-references to the *Narrative*, make plain that he is recounting his actual experience and knowledge in poetic form. The story of the 'Bechuana Boy', for instance, is 'taken from his own simple narrative,' the introduction of a fawn being Pringle's own 'poetical license' as he puts it.<sup>36</sup> Where Pringle does imagine a scene, he admits it, as in the note to 'The Rock of Reconciliation': 'The poem [...] describes an imaginary scene, but yet drawn with a strict regard to truth, both as regards scenery and sentiment. - See Philip's Researches, vol. i, p. 102, and vol. ii, p. 197.'<sup>37</sup>

The *Narrative*, therefore, constructs an associative world for the reader in which the poetry may be correctly interpreted (in Pringle's view) both as regards its sentiment as well as its factual accuracy. Pringle vouches for the truth of his poetic response both

<sup>35</sup> 'Preface' to *African Sketches*, in Pereira and Chapman, p. 138.

<sup>36</sup> In Pereira and Chapman, p. 78.

<sup>37</sup> In Pereira and Chapman, p. 109.

by his own testimony in the *Narrative*, and by references to the works of others, such as Dr. John Philip. In a letter to Fairbairn of 1833, Pringle noted the move in popular taste away from poetry: 'The public taste has turned to the Arts & Sciences, natural history, & political economy, &c. "Poetry is a drug".'<sup>38</sup> Most of the poetry in *African Sketches* is, however, neither fantastic nor anodyne, bound as it is by a ligature to a real, not imagined, world.

The majority of the verses in *Poems* have been closely considered in other chapters, in the context of their original date of publication. Two important poems first published in *African Sketches* not yet explored, however, are 'The Forester of the Neutral Ground' and 'The Emigrant's Cabin'. 'The Forester of the Neutral Ground' is a romantic ballad about Arend Plessie, the son of a Boer who falls in love with Brown Dinah.<sup>39</sup> His father and brothers are incensed and lure him away from their farm to attack and shoot marauding Bushmen, during which time Dinah is abducted and sold into slavery to prevent the two from marrying. When he has discovered their betrayal, however, he rides off, finds her, and they flee together to the Neutral Territory (see chapter three). Once there, he conquers the Bushman (whom, ironically, he had gone to attack earlier - just as Pringle had called out a commando against 'Pangola') and the Caffers 'by justice and kindness' (line 71). His only worry is for the future of his wife and sons once he is dead, and he asks the 'Stranger' when England will send 'the Edict of Mercy' 'To break the harsh fetters of Colour and Caste?' (lines 91-92).

Pringle says in his notes that the poem is a 'fictitious case', but that 'the story of the poem is founded on facts, which occurred some years ago in a different quarter of the

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38 FB:I:146B London, 21 January, 1833.

39 Hay, a South African, omitted this poem in his collection of Pringle's verse in 1912, probably owing to its approval of miscegenation.

Colony.'<sup>40</sup> Much can be said about the colonial attitudes prevalent in Pringle's poetry, with the benefit of hindsight. For instance, Arend Plessie becomes a spokesman in this poem for Pringle's own view of colonialism, that is, conquering by 'justice and kindness', and he also expects that England will be responsible for passing the laws which would bring justice and racial harmony. Pringle knew that the British and Dutch colonisation of the Cape had had disastrous beginnings (and there is no better testament to that than the *Narrative*), but he still believed that further colonisation could be achieved philanthropically and without force. This vision was not borne out by history, but this poem, as well as many others by Pringle, shows him to be a rare voice when it comes to benevolent colonialism, even at a time before Victorian jingoism and scientific racism became the dominant ideologies of empire. In comparing Arend and Pringle, Klopper says that 'like Arend, Pringle defied popular sentiment by attempting to situate himself in an intermediate space within the racial interface and, like Arend, he was, in a sense, a prisoner of that space by virtue of his paternalistic attitudes.'<sup>41</sup> Pringle did defy popular sentiment, and saw himself as a victim of colonial oppression.<sup>42</sup> Not surprisingly, therefore, most of the characters in his poems dealing with oppression are victims, who nevertheless achieve heroic stature. In 'The Forester of the Neutral Ground' Arend and Dinah live at peace with their neighbours in the Neutral Territory. The Bechuana boy, from the poem of the same name, becomes a part of the Pringle family because he has the courage to run away from his oppressive Boer owner. The colonist in 'Afar in the Desert' finds refuge from colonial oppression in God. The wild Bushman, though forced into the desert, tames it and arms himself with poisoned arrows lest the 'White Man' (line 30)

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40 In Pereira and Chapman, p. 110.

41 Klopper (1990), p. 54.

42 Bank adds that 'Pringle's racial ideology was equally challenging to the existing order', p. 200.

tries to enslave him.<sup>43</sup> The Bushman who is slain in the sonnet of that name urges his sons never to trust “‘Christian Men’ - for they are fiends!” (line 14). In ‘The Desolate Valley’ the ‘dry’, ‘unburied bones / of Ghona’s children’ (lines 64-65) awake to receive justice on judgement day. ‘The Slave Dealer’ recognises and pays for his sins. Makanna declares war on the colonial government in ‘Makanna’s Gathering’ and rouses his troops for battle. In ‘The Incantation’, Jalúhsa’s daughter, whom Pringle makes Makanna’s widow by a ‘fiction’ as he freely admits,<sup>44</sup> pierces her breast, calls on God, and vows that her son will avenge his father’s death, and sweep the foe from the land. From one perspective, Pringle’s characters in these poems explore ways of existing and surviving in colonial society. These range from refuge in God (‘Afar in the Desert’ / ‘The Rock of Reconcilement’), coexistence and integration under the British (‘The Bechuana Boy’ / ‘The Forester of the Neutral Ground’), to armed resistance (‘Song of the Wild Bushman’ / ‘Makanna’s Gathering’) and, finally, a struggle against oppression (‘To Oppression’) and a struggle against the white man, passed from parent to child (‘The Bushman’) which includes a call for vengeance (‘The Incantation’). Pringle also included his own idealised vision of life as a settler on the frontier, in ‘The Emigrant’s Cabin’. In a letter to Fairbairn he explains the genesis of the poem:

You will be surprised to find yourself hitched into rhyme in a long piece of verse you have never seen. The fact is that on turning over my old scraps one day I found the rough commencement of a rhyming epistle to you, the germ or embryo of what you now see, & which I had begun, but never sent to you, & indeed had entirely forgotten. I set to

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43 When Pringle wrote ‘The Song of the Wild Bushman’ in 1825 the opening lines read: ‘Let the proud boor possess his flocks, / And boast his fields of grain.’ In 1834 this was changed to ‘Let the proud White Man boast his flocks, / And fields of foodful grain;’ Pringle substituted ‘White Man’ for ‘Boor’ in the *African Sketches* version of many of his early poems, showing his enlarged perspective on who actually bore the responsibility for colonial injustice. Boers, nevertheless, still feature as individuals in several poems, particularly in ‘The Bechuana Boy’, ‘The Lion Hunt’, and ‘The Forester of the Neutral Ground.’

44 In Pereira and Chapman, p. 101.

& with little labour extended it to the thing you now see - (not the worst of my attempts in my own opinion) - and retaining the original date, I managed by a little anachronism to bring in the D<sup>r</sup>. [Philip] & other friends. I really think it improves my African Collection considerably by giving a view of our familiar & domestic condition. My friend and neighbour the Wizard Coleridge is very fond of it.<sup>45</sup>

Pereira and Chapman praise the poem as follows: “‘The Emigrant’s Cabin’ is undoubtedly one of Pringle’s most important “African Sketches”, not only for the insight it provides into the life of an 1820 Settler - albeit an unusually gifted one - and for the light it throws on the multi-faceted personality of Pringle himself, but for the adroit admixture of Dutch-Afrikaans terms and phrases and the witty description of an embryonic indigenous culture, definably “South African” in character.’<sup>46</sup> Pereira and Chapman’s claim that Pringle’s poem describes an ‘indigenous culture, definably ‘South African’ in character, is difficult to sustain. Nevertheless, Pringle gives an excellent day-to-day portrait of his settlement in 1822.

In the poem, Pringle (‘P’) invites Fairbairn (‘F’) to dine with him in his cabin on the frontier. When Pringle wrote the first draft of the poem, Fairbairn was still in Scotland. The fictional dialogue transports Fairbairn to the scene and allows ‘P’ to show off his settlement in the best possible light, in order to entice Fairbairn over in actuality. The poem sets out to prove, therefore, that life on the frontier provides both physical and mental satisfaction. A lengthy description of their dinner, in which exotic species are consumed, proves that the frontier is both bountiful and invites domestication. ‘F’ is impressed, but questions whether the frontier can provide adequate mental stimulation: ‘Cut off, with these good ladies, from society, / Of savage life you soon must feel satiety: / The MIND requires fit exercise and food, / Not to be found ’mid Afric’s deserts rude’ (lines 92-95). As young men, he continues,

45 FB:I:150-150A, London, 22 May 1834.

46 Pereira and Chapman, p. 96.

they dreamt of a 'Poetic den' (line 106), a pastoral retreat which was, nevertheless, 'always within reach of Books and Men' (line 107). Finally, 'F' says: 'Be frank; confess the fact you cannot hide - / You sought this den from disappointed pride,' (lines 124-125), referring to Pringle's economic failure as an editor and poet in Edinburgh. Pringle counters the charge rather glibly, as he himself admits in the *Narrative* that his primary motive for emigration was economic: 'P. - You've missed the mark, Fairbairn: my breast is clear. / Nor wild Romance nor Pride allured me here: / Duty and Destiny with equal voice / Constrained my steps: I had no other choice' (lines 126-129). Quickly, he supports the settlement, stating that there are 'passing vexations and privations too' (line 147), but that these are eased by his wife and by his work: 'I have my farm and garden, tools and pen; / My schemes for civilising savage men' (lines 138-139). Furthermore, 'P's' British neighbours, whom he describes, are intelligent and philanthropic men:

220                   And thus, you see, even in my desert-den,  
                       I still hold intercourse with thinking men;  
                       And find fit subject to engage me too -  
                       For in this wilderness there's work to do;  
                       Some purpose to accomplish for the band  
                       Who left with me their much-loved Father-Land;  
                       Something for the sad Natives of the soil,  
                       By stern oppression doomed to scorn and toil;  
                       Something for Africa to do or say -  
                       If but one mite of Europe's debt to pay -  
                       If but one bitter tear to wipe away.  
                       Yes! here is work, my Friend, if I may ask  
                       Of Heaven to share in such a hallowed task!

After this discussion, 'P' and 'F' watch the sunset. 'F' comments that: 'This fair clime / And scene recall the patriarchal time' (lines 235-236). Finally, the Amatémbu chief, Powána, comes to pay a 'friendly visit' and 'smoke the Pipe of Peace with Scottish men' (lines 245-246). 'P' welcomes him, orders a bed to be prepared, and a



'fat sheep be slaughtered.' 'And, I pray, / Good Flink, for the attendants all provide; / These men dealt well with us at Zwart-Kei's side: / Besides, you know, 'tis the Great Guide's command / Kindly to treat the Stranger in our Land' (lines 267-271). Given that Pringle reworked and completed the poem in 1834, it might seem strange that he does not question his own right to the land, especially considering the sensitivity he shows towards this issue in the *Narrative*, and the implicit admission in the poem that the English are an imperial, occupying power, when 'F' compares them to the Romans: 'F. - Yet let us not these simple folk despise; / Just such *our* sires appeared in Cæsar's eyes' (lines 253 - 254). Klopper comments: 'The confidence with which Pringle speaks of the land as his own and refers to the Thembu chief as a stranger suggests that he does not question his right of possession. His assertion of ownership and exclusion of the claims of the other leans on the biblical phrase "The Stranger in our Land." This phrase imbues his act of possession, which is really an act of appropriation, with supernatural sanction.'<sup>47</sup> This is true to a certain extent, and, indeed, there are many examples of colonial appropriation in the poem.<sup>48</sup> But, in defence of Pringle, 'P' treats Powána as a fellow feudal lord. Pringle's settlement was on land appropriated from Boers involved in the Slagtersnek rebellion of 1815, including Frederik Cornelius Bezuidenhout who was shot. In this uprising, the Boers were fighting against British troops after Bezuidenhout had refused to answer to British law when he was convicted of mistreating one of 'his' Hottentots.<sup>49</sup> When 'P' describes the surrounding locations, he says: 'Beside yon *Kranz* whose pictured records tell / Of Bushmen's huntings in the days of old, / Ere here Bezuidenhout had

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47 Klopper (1990), p. 38.

48 For instance, the Pringle settlement is named as Scotland ('Glen-Lynden' / 'Eildon'), Scottish landscape is displaced into the name of Pringle's hound 'old Yarrow', and Scottish words and social mores (not to mention much contemporary British ideology) are replicated on the frontier in this version of the contact zone, though they co-exist with local idiom and practices.

49 See *Narrative*, pp. 68-75 for Pringle's account of this rebellion.

fixed his fold' (lines 163 - 165). In P's mind, therefore, neither he nor the colonial government was directly responsible for killing/displacing the original 'Bushman' inhabitants. Furthermore, his presence on the frontier as an enlightened, philanthropic colonist is (in his view) a vast improvement on the oppressive, slave-holding Boers. Crucially, however, the poem remains silent about the threat posed to the settlement by the displaced 'Bushmen' or about the measures which Pringle took while on the frontier to protect it.<sup>50</sup> The poem, therefore, while an accurate description of day to day life on the frontier, is conditioned by an idealised version of benevolent colonialism. In a letter to Fairbairn of 12 May 1825, when Pringle was back on the frontier, he says 'In short I am a very great personage & my influence & reputation (in spite of my loss of court favour) are equal to my magnificence. I am patriarch priest & king. I have Boors for clients & Bastaards for vassals. I have set afoot a Sunday School and perform services every Sunday in Dutch to an audience of about fifty souls - who come in waggons & in [sic] horseback, male & female - old & young - the black Chivalry of the Bavians River.' After his humour comes the truth: 'But in spite of my boasting in the preceding part of this letter this place is no station for either you or me.'<sup>51</sup> In Britain, Pringle found his 'station' as a respected poet, journalist, editor and abolitionist, but subsequently no 'place' in the British literary canon.

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50 Glen-Lynden was never actually attacked during Pringle's lifetime, though it did suffer from occasional stock theft.

51 FB:I:46A-B.

In *African Sketches*, Pringle presents an associative world in which his poetry and prose is complementary, and consonant with his political project. The *Narrative*, in combination with *Poems*, gives us a portrait of Pringle in all his guises including Pringle the philanthropic Christian Imperialist, Pringle the Scotsman, Pringle the colonist, Pringle the 'philosophical Bosjeman!' ('Emigrant's Cabin' line 123), and Pringle the defiant wild Bushman who proclaims:

No! the brown Serpent of the Rocks  
His den doth yet retain;  
And none who there his sting provokes,  
Shall find its poison vain! (lines 31-34)<sup>52</sup>

In this critical survey, I have attempted to avoid any partisan appropriation of Pringle's writings in order to make patent his importance as a literary figure in the complex world of the British Imperial nexus. It is in this context that Pringle's writings should take their place.

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<sup>52</sup> From 'Song of the Wild Bushman'.

## Appendix One:

### Thomas Pringle: a short biography

Thomas Pringle was born on 5 January 1789, on a farm in the parish of Linton, Roxburghshire in the Scottish Borders. His grandfather had leased the land as a tenant farmer from the Wauchope family in 1759, and his father succeeded in renewing the lease in 1782.

At a young age, Pringle was dropped by his nurse, Nanny Potts. He relates the event in an unfinished biographical letter of 1832, one of the few occasions in which he mentions the disability which resulted from this accident:

When I was only a few months old, I met with an accident in the nurse's arms, by which my right limb was dislocated at the hip-joint. The nurse, unfortunately, concealed the incident at the time; [...] I was thus rendered lame for life.<sup>1</sup>

At the age of three, Pringle learned to walk on crutches and continued to do so for the rest of his life. In 1795, when he was six years old, his mother died.

Seemingly precluded by his disability from a life as a farmer, it was thought that an academic career would be more suitable for him. Accordingly, he was sent to Kelso Grammar School in 1802, and entered Edinburgh University at the age of sixteen, in November 1805. Though he was a promising student, he did not take a degree, in common with many students at the time, and found his first job as a clerk in Edinburgh's General Registry Office in February 1808. His first publication, a poem called 'The Institute', was co-written with his friend Robert Story. This satire on the

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<sup>1</sup> In Josiah Conder, 'A Biographical Sketch of the Author', in *Narrative of a Residence in South Africa*, ed. by A. M. Lewin Robinson (Cape Town: Struik, 1966), pp. xxii-xxiii. Pringle, thus, had a similar disability to Scott and Byron.

Edinburgh Philomathic Society appeared in 1811, but did not attract much attention either to itself or its authors.

In 1816, several of Pringle's Scottish songs appeared in *Albyn's Anthology*, and his first major poem, the 'Autumnal Excursion', was published in James Hogg's *Poetic Mirror*. The poem attracted the interest of Walter Scott, and led to an acquaintance between the two men which was to become of practical importance during Pringle's residence at the Cape.

Pringle's career as a 'man of letters' commenced in 1817 when he became joint editor of the *Edinburgh Monthly Magazine* (shortly to become *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*) together with James Cleghorn. Pringle's political loyalties were to the Whigs, whereas William Blackwood was an outspoken Tory. A difference of political opinion, amongst other things, led to a row between the two. Consequently, Pringle resigned as editor after only six instalments, though he continued as co-editor of the rival journal, *Constable's Edinburgh Magazine*, much to Blackwood's chagrin. This move engendered a lively, and often bitterly personal, literary warfare against Pringle.

Even though Pringle's first volume of poetry, *The Autumnal Excursion and Other Poems*, appeared in 1819, it did not sell well and work as an editor was exhausting and ill-paid. Pringle had married Margaret Brown on 19 July 1817, and found that he and his wife could no longer survive financially. His father's family was also in desperate financial circumstances. It became increasingly evident that the Pringles could not survive in Scotland. They decided to emigrate.

Pringle was made *pro-tempore* leader of a group of 1820 settlers who arrived in Simon's Bay, South Africa, on 30 April 1820. The party was allotted an isolated location on the frontier of the Cape Province. He travelled extensively through that part of the country, making detailed notes in his journal and becoming a competent speaker

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of the language of the Boers (later to become Afrikaans). He also paid attention to the poetry of some of the local Xhosa groups then attached to mission stations.

In mid 1822, Pringle left his settlement and took up employment, as he originally intended, in Cape Town. He made the long overland trip to Cape Town with his wife and her sister in August to accept the post of government librarian in the newly established Government Library.

In October 1823, his friend John Fairbairn came to Cape Town at Pringle's request. They opened their school, the Classical and Commercial Academy, on 1 December. The following day, Pringle was granted permission to start a magazine by the colonial secretary, Earl Bathurst, even though the governor of the Cape, Lord Charles Somerset, had expressed serious misgivings.<sup>2</sup> The first issue was published on 5 March 1824 as the *South African Journal*. Pringle and Fairbairn had also joined the literary and editorial divisions of the newly founded *South African Commercial Advertiser*, on 21 January 1824.

The *Journal* and *Advertiser*, however, soon provoked the wrath of Somerset. A row erupted between the Governor, Pringle, and others, concerning the freedom of the press. A protracted battle followed, which eventually saw Somerset discredited and the British Government guaranteeing the freedom of the press in the colony. What Pringle called the Cape 'Reign of Terror,'<sup>3</sup> however, resulted in the closure of both the *Journal* and the *Advertiser*, and the ruination of his prospects in Cape Town. The Classical and Commercial Academy collapsed. Pringle fell into debt.

Disillusioned, he left Cape Town on 8 October 1824 for an excursion into the interior. Near the mission station called Genadendal, his horse shied at a Boer's dog and Pringle broke his thigh bone. The fracture took two months to mend at the mission

2 See Jane Meiring, *Thomas Pringle: His Life and Times* (Cape Town: Balkema, 1968), pp. 85-86.

3 Thomas Pringle, *Narrative of a Residence in South Africa*, ed. by A. M. Lewin Robinson (Cape Town: Struik, 1966), p. 175.

station. He returned to Cape Town in December 1824. *Some Account of the Present State of the English Settlers in Albany, South Africa*, was published in London in this month.

From February 1825, Pringle toured extensively through the frontier territory, where he befriended Dr. John Philip and Captain Sir Andries Stockenstrom.<sup>4</sup> In April 1826 he finally left South Africa for London, together with his wife and a young Bechuana boy called Hinza Marossi, whom the Pringles had adopted.

An article on slavery at the Cape in the October 1826 edition of the *New Monthly Magazine* (London) attracted the attention of the Anti-Slavery Society and led to his appointment as their secretary in March 1827. From then, until the presentation of the document containing the Act of Abolition, signed by Pringle, on 27 June 1834, he campaigned tirelessly for the cause and wrote much of the Society's propaganda. He also published the narrative of a West Indian slave called Mary Prince. During this period, Pringle edited the London annual, *Friendship's Offering* (1828-1834), contributed poetry to several magazines and keepsakes, edited the *Oriental Herald* from 1826[?]-1829, and sent a wealth of journalism to various newspapers. His second volume of poetry, *Ephemerides: or Occasional Poems, Written in Scotland and South Africa*, was published in 1828. *Glen-Lynden: A Tale of Teviotdale* also appeared in this year.

The work for which Pringle is best remembered, *African Sketches*, which included his *Narrative of a Residence in South Africa*, was published in 1834, a few months before the Act of Abolition was signed. The book was an immediate success, and was soon translated into German and Dutch. Pringle, however, was not to witness this.

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<sup>4</sup> Philip was superintendent of the London Missionary Society in South Africa and an influential political figure. Like Pringle, he wanted the Cape Colony to be bordered by a succession of native states. Stockenstrom became Lt. Governor of the Eastern Districts in 1836. Both men advocated liberal policies towards the natives.

Having finally repaid his debts in South Africa, and at the apex of his political and literary career, on the day he presented the Act of Abolition, Pringle showed the first signs of consumption. Hasty plans were made to depart for South Africa, but his condition deteriorated rapidly. On 5 December 1834, at the age of 46, he died.<sup>5</sup> He was buried in Bunhill Fields, London, alongside Bunyan, Defoe and Blake.

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<sup>5</sup> I have used the chronology in J. R. Doyle, Jr.'s, *Thomas Pringle* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1972), pp. 13-15, as a rough guide when constructing this one.

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## Appendix Two

### Three Poems

#### SPEECH

*Of His Majesty King MATEEBE*<sup>1</sup>

BECHAUNAS - Matclapees -  
Dare ye meet the Mantatees?  
Bamacootas - Baralongs -  
Dare ye front the hostile throngs?  
Myrees, Matcloroos and Briquas,  
Dare ye mingle with the Griquas?  
Dare ye face with noble Moffat  
These savage hounds and sons of Tophet?

I know ye well - ye Matclapees!  
Your bloodless hearts are soft as cheese; -  
Before the women always bragging,  
Near the foe, your courage flagging,  
Ye scamper off like scar'd jackalls  
To your coverts or your kraals,  
Where with heads between your knees  
Ye skulk like dogs, and kill - the fleas!  
Dastard dogs, that merit not  
To eat - even from a broken pot!

Bechuana! - Matclapees!-  
Dare ye face the Mantatees?  
Shall we muster to the battle?  
Will ye fight or lose your cattle?  
Lose your cattle - kraals - and wives -  
To cannibals with crooked knives!  
But hark, ye women - hold your shrieking -  
At least till we are done with speaking -  
I say, abate your senseless squalling,  
Or I will give your hides a galling!  
Provoking pests of womankind!  
With fear or fury always blind -  
The secrets of our COURT revealing, -  
Ever scolding - often stealing -  
In some mischief, aye, delighting,  
And hindering the men from fighting;-  
Such milky-liver'd sneaking things,

---

<sup>1</sup> SACA, 21 January 1824, p. 19.

Are men who make their wives their kings!  
 A husband who can't use the *sambok*,  
 Has less discretion than a ram, bok,  
 Baboon or jack-ass! - take for sample,  
 My recreant brothers' late example -  
 Which, if *you younger ones* shall follow,  
 And I be left *solus cum sola* -  
 I say no more - but wish that Evil  
 May catch you, - which the whites call *Devil!*

And tho' we sore might feel the want  
 Of females born to build and plant,  
 And dig, and do domestic duties -  
 (Not done so well by Cape Town beauties,)   
 Yet, by the head of Mallagavlin,  
 I swear I will not shake a javelin,  
 Nor draw an arrow from my quiver,  
 To save the carcass, limbs, or liver,  
 Of women that shall scold and squall,  
 From the ravenous maw of the Cannibal!

Keep silence, too - ye kidney-eaters,  
 Coward, cunning, canting cheaters!  
 Oft incog. upon my rambles,  
 I've found you near the royal shambles,  
 Hanging round, like gaunt hyænas,  
 Of the guts and grease to drain us -  
 Think, if foes our cattle *did* seize,  
 Where would ye get tripe and kidneys?

But listen to your king's command,  
 Ye chiefs and champions of the land! -  
 To your wives no more be trucklers,  
 Seize your kirries and your bucklers;  
 Smear your limbs with melted lard,  
 Let your hearts be great and hard!  
 Banish fear and faint demurrage,  
 Strike your shields and rouse your courage;  
 Rouse yourselves for feats uncommon,  
 Curse the Bushmen and the foemen!

Lo, MELZIL, Lord of Griqua - Bastards,  
 Hastes to help ye, heartless dastards!  
 And, eke, upon his fiery steed,  
 A trusty friend in time of need,  
 Call'd Captain TONSON of Cape Town,  
 Comes to ride the rascals down;  
 From Cape-land Chiefs he kindly greets you -  
 And *here* he's! - present at our Peitshow,  
 Noting down, with pen and ink,  
 All that now we say or think -  
 Consider, then, how ye shall look,  
 When put into a printed book;  
 And how white Captains that wear breeches,  
 May criticise black Captain's speeches!

Rouse up for shame, ye warriors, then!  
 Up and quit yourselves like men.  
 Like heroes now, and Mallahowans,  
 Give to vengeance full allowance! -  
 Fight not as ye used to do - as  
 Children fight - but like Macooas;  
 Make your bull-hide targets stronger,  
 Your battle-axes sharp as hunger!  
 In their faces howl defiance,  
 Gnash your teeth and roar like lions!  
 Point your arrows at their eyes,  
 Pin them with your hassegais!  
 Drive them back to whence they came,  
 And blast their nation and their name!  
 Then to your kraals return in glory,  
 While HATTA shall rehearse our story  
 To the Captains of the Cape,  
 Who at our daring deeds shall gape!

Up Teysho, Issita, Moshuma!  
 Up Incha! Dleeloqua, Ranyuma!  
 Semeeno, Mongual, and Bromello!  
 Each wary sage and warlike fellow;  
 Up and arm you for the battle -  
 We must fight, or lose our cattle!

[Pringle to Fairbairn, 12 October 1825, FB:I:184. The # symbol is an approximation]

War Song ^ of Lynx  
 The Caffer Prophet, #  
 Before the Attack on Graham's Town

=====

Wake, Amakosa<sup>#</sup>, wake!  
 And arm yourselves for war.  
 As coming winds the forest shake,  
 I hear a sound from far:  
 It is not thunder in the sky,  
 Nor lion's roar upon the hill,  
 But the voice of One who sits on high,  
 And bids me speak his will.

---

# Lynx appears to have been an extraordinary man; and, had he arisen in other times, or not come in collision with European power, he might perhaps have become the Mahomet of Cafferland. He raised himself from indigence & obscurity to the rank of a chief, & acquired an astonishing influence over his countrymen by his powers of eloquence, & by his address in directing to his purposes their strong tendency & superstition. Whether he was more an Impostor or an Enthusiast is uncertain. But he undoubtedly possessed great ambition, & ^ seemed to have [had - deleted] some wild indistinct aspirations after virtue & renown. He was capable of profound dissimulation; & evinced great talent in bringing the superior chiefs (naturally jealous of his influence) to concur in his plans; & in directing their united force to the formidable attempt upon Graham's Town in 1819.

He pretended to a mission from the Deity; and persuaded the Caffers that he could raise the deceased forefathers to aid them against the English.

He had picked up some ^ imperfect notions [indistinct knowledge - deleted] of Christianity by conversing with M<sup>r</sup>. Vanderlinger, Chaplain of the Cape Corps, & with other Missionaries, & ^ mingled [mixed up - crossed out] this ^ information [knowledge - deleted] in a strange manner with his own pretended revelations.

His surrender to Captain Stockenstrom after the entire failure of his warlike schemes, & his death in a bold attempt to escape from Robben Island, are generally known.

# Amakosa, the Caffer name for their own nation.

[FB:I:184A]

He bids me call you forth,  
 Bold sons of Cahabie, #  
 To sweep the White Men from the earth,  
 And drive them to the sea.  
 The Sea, which flung them up at first  
 For Amakosa's curse and bane,  
 Howls for the progeny she nurst -  
 To swallow them again

==

Hark - to the Spirit's voice  
 From high Luheri's caves! #  
 It calls you now to make your choice -  
 To conquer or be slaves:  
 To combat England's thundering guns,  
 And live like warriors nobly born;  
 Or crouch with base Umlao's sons #  
 Whom freemen hold in scorn.

---

# Cahabi or Kachabi, was the Grandfather of Gaika, & father of Hlambi and Jaluhsa. He was the most enterprising & formidable Chief of his time, though in hereditary rank inferior to Khauta the father of Hinza. He is regarded as a great warrior by his countrymen, and the frontier Caffers sometimes distinguish themselves by his name. He was slain in battle on an expedition against the Tambookies, or, as they are called by Lichtenstein, the tribe of Mathimba: The native name is Amatimba.

# Luheri is a remarkable mountain near the source of the Katt River.

# The Caffer appellation for the Hottentots.

[FB:I:184B]

Breathes there a dastard here  
 Who dreads fierce England's fire?  
 Let him in darkness shroud his fear,  
 And from our ranks retire -  
 Retire, as does the sneaking fox,  
 Or wolfish Boschman, to his hold -  
 Fit slave to tend the Christian's flocks,  
 With wretches bought and sold!

==

But come, ye chieftains bold,  
 With war plumes waving high; #  
 Come every warrior young & old,  
 With club & assegai.  
 Behold - and kindle at the sight -  
 Our homes, our herds upon the plain;  
 It is for them we rush to fight -  
 Nor shall we fight in vain.

==

Fling your broad shields away -  
 They guard not 'gainst such foes;  
 But hand to hand we'll fight to-day  
 And with their bayonets close.  
 Break each man short his [strongest - deleted] spear #  
 And, when to battle's edge we come,  
 Rush on the foe in full career,  
 And to their hearts strike home!

---

# The Caffer Chiefs, on going to war, adorn their heads with tall crests of Crane feathers.

# The Caffer Warriors have usually one very stout assegai, which they seldom or never employ as a missile, but reserve for thrusting with in any emergency. It is said that Lynx, before the attack on Graham's Town, advised them to break short the shafts of these assegais, & rush in upon the troops to close combat. Had they done so, that dangerous conflict might have had, perhaps, a very different result.

[FB:I:184C]

Wake! Amakosa, Wake!  
 And muster for the war!  
 The gaunt hyenas from the brake,  
 The vultures from afar,  
 Are gathering at my Spirit's cave,  
 And joyful guide our westward way,  
 For well they know, ere evening fall,  
 They shall have glorious prey!  
 [Oct. 12. 1825 - deleted] S.E.



[FB:I:192]

To the Ostrich

Lone dweller of the Wilderness,  
Who lov'st the scenes which others shun,  
And liv'st in peaceful happiness  
Far in the deserts dun, -  
Though parched and desolate thy haunts,  
They yield enough for all thy wants,  
Nor seekest thou for more;  
And, therefore, I may call thee blest,  
Although the home thou lovest best  
Be such as men abhor.

The uninhabitable waste,  
Where only bitter herbs abound,  
Is furnished forth to suit thy taste,  
And blooms thy garden ground;  
A fountain too to thee is given,  
Fed by the thunder clouds from heaven,  
And treasur'd in the clifts;  
For thee[sic] boon Nature plants and sows,  
Thou reaps't the harvest as it grows,  
Rejoicing in her gifts.

Thou has no tyrant-foe to fear -  
Thy foot is flat, thy wing is strong;  
The huntsman, should he wander near,  
May not pursue thee long:  
Swift oe'r the plain thou speed'st thy flight,  
Like demon from the dawning light,  
To some far solitude,  
By human footsteps never pres't,  
Where thou hast scoop'd a simple nest  
To nurse thy callow brood.

Untamed - untroubled Wanderer!  
I almost long to fly [live - deleted] with thee  
Far from the World's tumultuous stir  
To Nature's liberty -  
O'er the untravelled wilds to roam,  
And seek like thee a hermit home  
In some rude glen's recess,  
Remote from human ^ vice [guilt - deleted] and folly,  
And misery and melancholy,  
And cruel selfishness.

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